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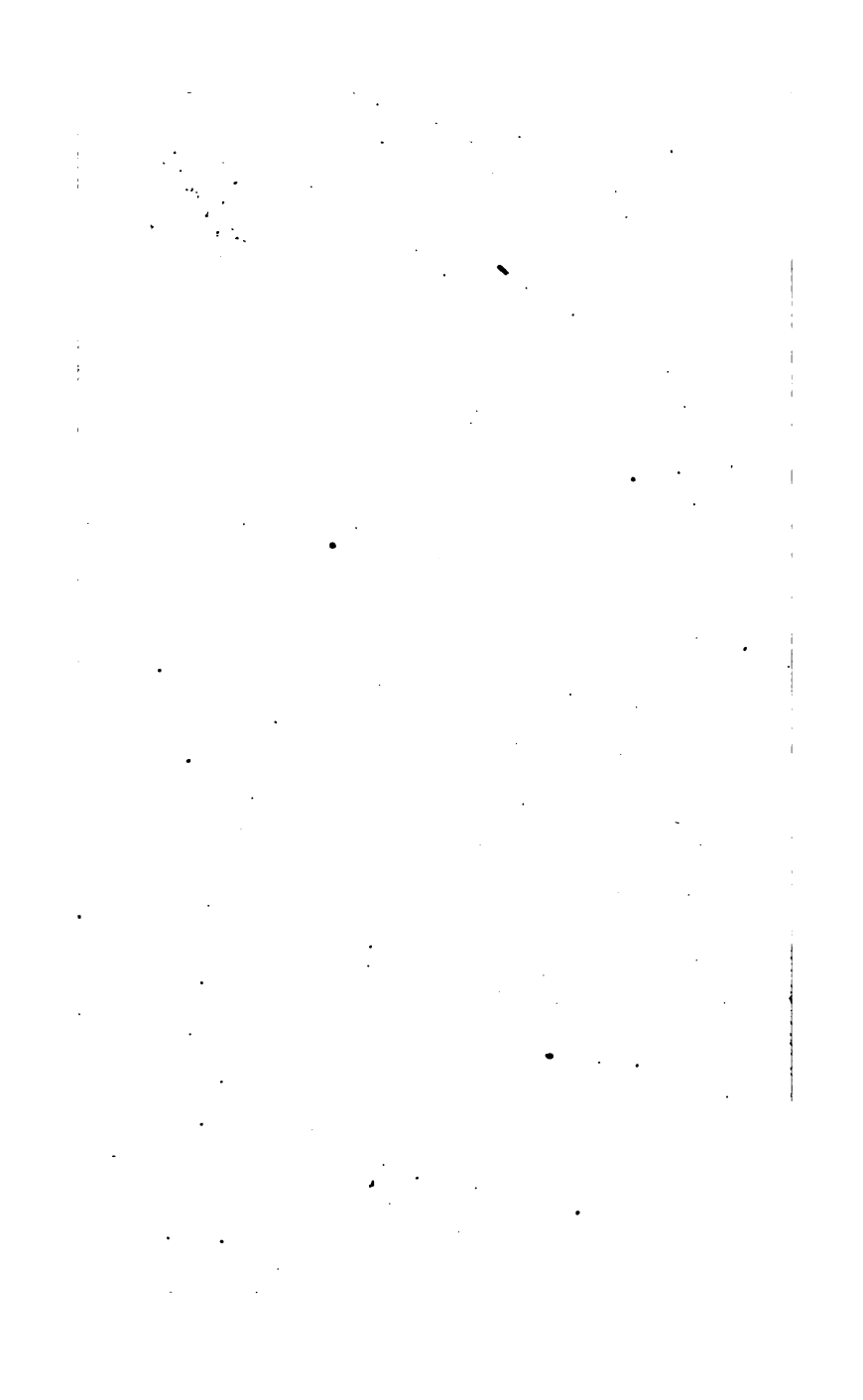


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A Virgin shall conceive and bear
a Son, and shall call his name
Emmanuel which is, God with us.

9

A GUIDE FOR PASSING

Advent

HOLILY,

IN WHICH IS FOUND FOR EACH DAY,

A PRACTICE, MEDITATION,

THOUGHTS UPON PORTIONS OF HOLY SCRIPTURE FOR
THE SEASON,

SENTENCES FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AND
THE FATHERS;

AND

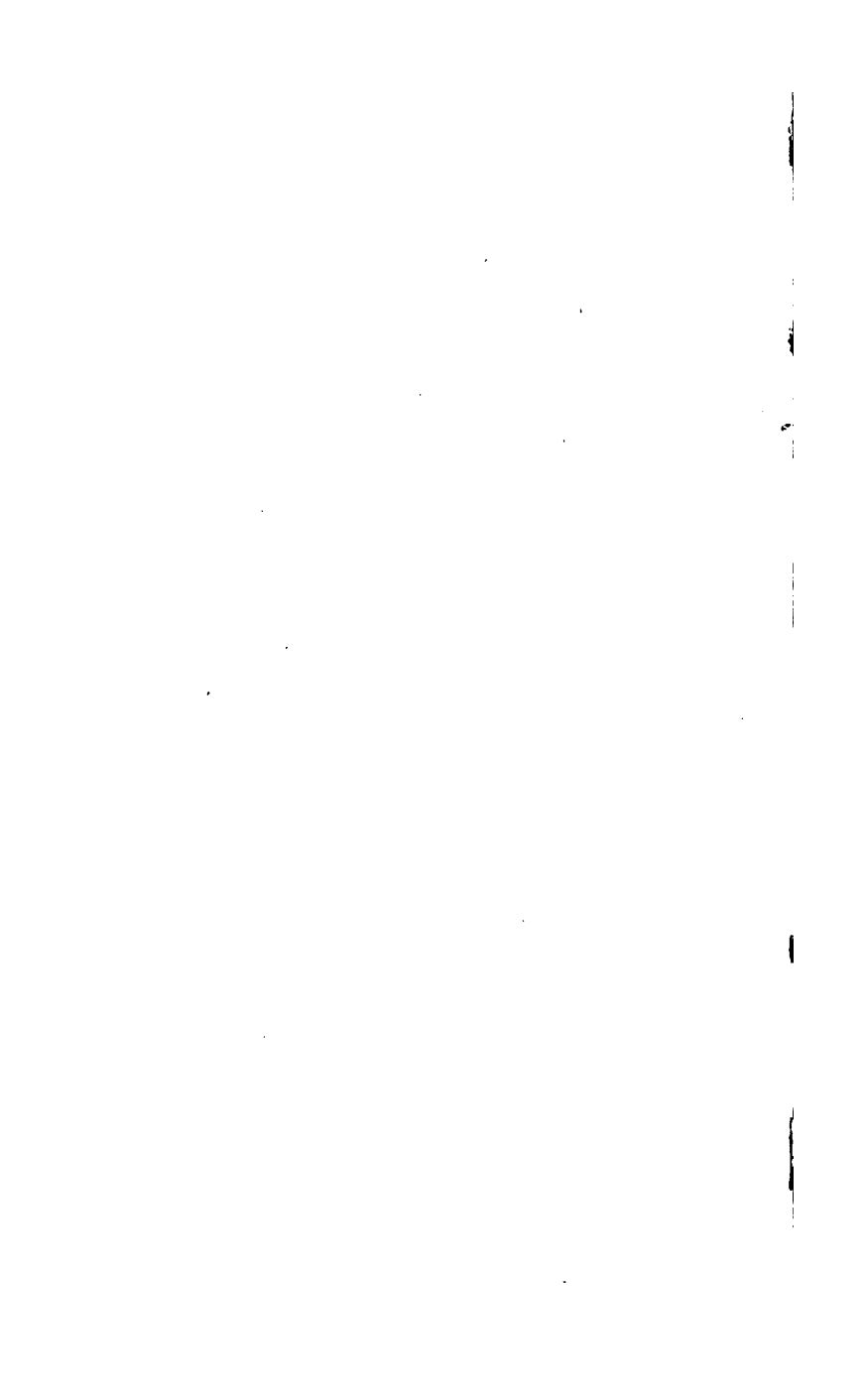
ONE POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

BY AVRILLON.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH, AND ADAPTED TO THE USE
OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH.

LONDON:
WILLIAM JONES CLEAVER, 80, BAKER STREET,
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& J. H. PARKER, OXFORD.
1847.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Nativity of our LORD having ever been celebrated by the Church as one of its chief Festivals, being at once the greatest and most awful of all mysteries, and involving in itself all the other miracles of mercy of Almighty God, it is impossible but that there must have been from the first some preparation for its approach. Christians, of old, well knew that the mind could not at once entertain holy thoughts fully ; that it could not pass at once from things of earth to things of heaven, from all our manifold distractions in things of time and sense, to gather up ourselves in the contemplation of Him Who is God, Consubstantial, Coequal, Coeternal with the Father, emptying Himself, and becoming as one of us, a little Child.

And accordingly, in the earliest collection we have of the Church's prayers, the Sacramentary of Gelasius (A. 492), we find a distinct Advent service¹. Be-

¹ This examination of the Gelasian Sacramentary was occasioned by the statement of M. Guéranger, *l'Avent Liturgique*, p. 7, that "the Sacramentary of S. Gelasius contains

through the Advent of the Only-Begotten ;" the yoke of sin be dissolved by "the new Nativity of the Only-Begotten ;" "by His Coming they might be freed from the adversities which for their sins they deserved ;" that receiving their REDEEMER with thankful expectation, they might, "free from fear, see Him when He came as their Judge." There seems, however, no doubt that there was fuller service and special Collects for the Communion on other days of Advent also, perhaps daily. For, although in the single copy in which the Gelasian Sacramentary has been preserved to us, the days upon which the Collects were used are not specified, there are inserted, after the service for the Fifth Sunday, eleven Collects, eight of which, with others, occupy the corresponding place in the Gregorian, and are entitled, "Prayers on the Advent of the LORD for each day." In addition to these, under each Sunday (besides the first which is probably the especial Sunday Collect,) there occur eight other Collects, which in the Gregorian are classed with the Collects for daily use. It could not indeed be at once inferred, that these Collects were for daily use, since on other days also, in the Gelasian Sacramentary, more than one Collect occur ; still it may be the more probable, since they are the same as those used in the daily service in the Gregorian. There are also seven ⁵ services for

⁵ Nov. 21. Vigil 22. Feast of S. Cæcilia ; 23. S. Clement and S. Felicitas ; 29. SS. Saturninus, Chrysanthus, Maurus, Daria, and Vigil. 30. S. Andrew ; Dec. 7. Oct. of S. Andrew ; 21. S. Thomas.

the Communion on Saints'-days which could fall within the longer period then assigned to Advent. As then we know that the Holy Communion was daily in the Western Church, so, doubtless, there were special Collects and Communions with reference to the Advent of our Lord on ordinary week-days also, at the close of the sixth century.

But the Gelasian Sacramentary itself (apart from the Canon, which in substance and mostly in words is Apostolic) gives evidence that many of its integral parts are of earlier date. Indeed, all which is attributed to Gelasius is, that he "wrote⁶ hymns after the manner of the Blessed Ambrose, and wrote Sacramental 'prefaces' and (it is added⁷) prayers in well-weighed language⁸," or, as another⁹, "he is said to have arranged prayers composed partly by himself, partly by others." But, as there is no doubt that parts of the Eucharistic office were fixed from the very first, and are of Apostolic origin; so there can be as little, that other parts of the Church's treasure gradually accumulated. Some, beyond all question, bear the stamp of the marked and beautiful language of S. Leo I.;¹⁰ in others a somewhat rugged and

⁶ Catal. Rom. Pontif. in Prolegom. ad t. iv. Anastas. quoted by Muratori, de Orig. S. Liturg. c. 5.

⁷ Anastas. Pontif. ib.

⁸ Canto sermone. I conclude, the condensed and measured style of the ancient Collects.

⁹ Walafr. Strab. de Reb. Eccl. c. 22. ib.

¹⁰ Basnage even founds on this an argument against the genuineness of the Gelasian Sacramentary (Hist. Eccl. t. ii. xvi. 10); as if the Roman Church had had no Liturgy before

broken style seems to belong to an earlier age, and has been thought¹, at least, to be of the date of Sylvester, at the beginning of the fourth century. They appear to bear a date much earlier. The language of Pope Innocent², the contemporary of S. Augustine, implies a long traditionary ritual in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, which he without hesitation believed to have been derived from S. Peter.

External evidence, as to the length of Advent, we can hardly expect, no sermons having been preserved in the Latin Church anterior to S. Augustine. The absence of any Advent sermons in the large collection of the genuine sermons of S. Augustine, while several have been preserved on the Nativity of our Lord, would throw some doubt whether any such were preached in his time in Africa; on the other hand, in the few preserved of Maximus, very little subsequently (A. 422), two were preached upon Sundays³ in Advent.

Of a yet more solemn length was the Advent season in the Churches of Milan, France, and Spain;

Gelasius, or that Gelasius would do away with the treasure before him, and the Church's Liturgies were but the offspring of a day, displacing one another!

¹ Morinus de Pœnit. ix. 30. § 2. Thomasius Pref. Card. Bona, de Reb. Liturg. quotes from the Acta S. Susannæ, ap. Baron. A. 294, n. 10, collects in use in the third century. The Council of Milevis (A. 402) enacts, Can. 12, that none should be used in the Church which were not sanctioned by a Synod. See Bingham, xv. 1.

² Ep. ad Decent.

³ This is stated at the beginning of the second Sermon.

more solemn also, in that it was conformed to the Lenten season, and Advent also extended through forty days of self-discipline, although not of equal severity. The date of this observance in the Church of Milan is unknown. But as the peculiarities of the Ambrosian Liturgy are probably of early date, and the course of later times has been to shorten, not to lengthen, the duration of Advent, it seems most probable that the assignment of six Sundays to Advent, which still appears in the Ambrosian Sacramentary, is of very high antiquity. From the Ambrosian, the same period was adopted in Spain in the Mozarabic Missal, and doubtless in the Gallican also, as the intermediate link between these two. The first mention of the fast is in the Church of France, where the Advent fast⁴ is mentioned in connexion with other regulations for fasting throughout the year. The system, as it is given by S. Gregory of Tours⁵, dates from a former Bishop of Tours, St. Perpetuus (A. 461); but, as clearly the whole system did not then commence, since Vigils also are there enumerated, some of which must have been much earlier, it is uncertain whether the fast of Advent was first instituted for France. The regulation of S. Perpetuus, which remained in force, as S. Gregory of Tours informs us, in his own time, prescribed fasts on two

⁴ The following facts, as to the Western Church, are taken (with reference to the original sources) from Martene, de Ant. Eccl. rit. iv. 10; and Baillet, Les Vies des Saints; Fêtes mobiles, t. iv. l'Avent, who are followed by Benedict XIV., Inst. xi., Opp. t. x. p. 19. and Guéranger, l'Année Liturgique.

⁵ Hist. x. 31.

days of the week, during the greater part of the year ; but during Advent, " from the deposition of S. Martin (Nov. 11) to the Nativity," upon three days ⁶. These were probably the Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, as ordained by the first Council of Maçon (A. 580), Can. 9.

Subsequently, also, the variation seems to have related to the severity and degree of the fast, or the character of the persons held to be obliged to it, not for the most part, until of late, to the period included in Advent. The Church appears to have desired to bring her children to what degree of strictness she could, yet to have adapted herself to their infirmities ⁷. Those who aimed at a higher life, or who were to be " ensamples to the flock," the monks and the clergy,

⁶ Chrodegand, Bp. of Metz (A. 742), (in his Reg. Can. c. 35, ap. D'Achery, Spicil. t. i.) follows in part the distribution of S. Perpetuus ; but his rule, as being for Regulars, is severer. It requires abstinence from meat on Wednesdays and Fridays during the Pentecostal season ; from Pentecost to the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24), it enjoins abstinence from flesh meat, allowing two meals ; thence to S. Martin's, abstinence on Wednesday and Friday ; and from S. Martin's to the Nativity of our Lord, daily abstinence and fast until three ; and thence to the beginning of Lent, a fast until three, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and on Wednesday and Friday abstinence from meat subsequently. The regulations as to the rest of the year have been here added, since without them we could form no estimate as to the relative strictness of the Advent rules.

⁷ " Let the priests also *induce* all their parishioners, except the sick, to abstain from meat during the Advent of the Lord." Stat. Synodal, Henric. Ep. Sistaric. c. 101, ap. Martene.

appear to have been often bound to fast⁸, while the laity were free. But the length of the fast implies the length of the Advent season, since preparation for the worthy celebration of the Nativity was its only object; the relaxation of the fast does not imply the absence of any solemn preparation at all. Thus, plainly, when the Council of Seligstadt (A. 1022), can. 1. reduced to one-half the "Lents" after Pentecost and before Advent, and prescribed only twenty days' fast before S. John Baptist's Day, and twenty before the Nativity of our LORD, it clearly did not abridge the Advent season itself. The period then of forty days, as the duration of Advent, was, during the eighth and ninth centuries, in France and Germany, prescribed, in connexion with the great Lent, and that after Pentecost, as an universal fast⁹.

⁸ The rule of Chrodegand (see above) is for regulars only. In the second Council of Tours (A. 570), can. 17, a severer rule is re-enacted, but as being "an old institute among the monks." In this, a fast on the Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, is the rule for the whole year, with the exception of the Pentecostal season, (when all fasting is remitted, except on the Rogation days,) from the Nativity of our LORD to the Epiphany, and for the month of August (on account of the frequency of festivals). In December until the Nativity, a daily fast is superadded. The Stat. Antiq. Synodal. Eccl. Biterr. c. 15. t. iv. Anecd. ap. Mart. enforce abstinence from flesh meat during Advent, but on priors and beneficed clergy or with cure of souls only.

⁹ "Universale jejuniū." Rabanus Maur. (A. 847) de Instit. Cler. ii. 22. Capitular. Reg. Franc. vi. c. 187. Of the ninth century is the MS. of the Epist. ad Bibianum, which, although a forgery, attests the existing practice of commencing Advent

Notices of the whole of the period being kept as a daily fast, (although, perhaps, with signs of relaxation,) occur down to the twelfth century ¹.

Notices of an equal length of fast (although, as it happens, in the case of eminent ascetics,) occur in our own early history also ². "The fast of S. Martin" (whence the forty days are dated) is mentioned, A. 753, in Italy as a well-known date, and the three Lents are spoken of by Pope Nicolas I. (A. 858), in writing to the Bulgarians, as fasts which "the holy Roman Church received of old, and holds ³."

Yet, altogether, the Advent fast seems to have rested not upon any universal authority, but upon the regulations of Provincial Councils, or hereditary piety: and, except as far as either were contravened, to have been matter of counsel, not of obligation. In this respect, a marked difference exists between this

from the Feast of S. Martin, which it would correct. (ap. Mabill. de Lit. Gall. p. 100.)

¹ Joh. Beleth (A. 1102) assigns, as a reason, why S. Thomas' Day had no Vigil, "that his feast is in Advent, in which we *ought* to observe, as it were, a continuous fast." Durandus (A. 1286), in assigning the same ground, says, "when the fast is continuous." Ration. vi. 7. § 18.

² Egbert (A. 664-729), who observed the three Lents (Bede, Hist. Eccl. iii. 27), and Bishop Eadbert (A. 698), who was wont to pass the season in an island apart, "in great devotion of abstinence, prayer, and tears." Ib. iv. 30. Martene quotes this of S. Cuthbert, whom Bede relates to have served God in retirement there.

³ C. iv. Conc. t. xxii. p. 436, ed. Reg. I do not see what Baillet states, and after him Guéranger, that Pope Nicolas limits Lent to four weeks.

and the great Lent, as of Apostolic institution. Thus, even in France, where it was ever most observed, the Capitularies say, "although ⁴ some of these fasts are without canonical authority, yet by us it is befitting that they be observed, alike on account of the practice of the people, and the custom of our forefathers:" and S. John Damian (A. 1057) speaks of "the Lent which, by *received practice* ⁵, precedes the Nativity of the LORD." Pope Innocent III. also, although consulted upon it by the Archbishop of Braga, gives no opinion, but simply states it to be the Roman practice ⁶. In other parts of the same Epistle, he recommends that the local practices be followed. In later times Bellarmine, giving the received opinion in the Roman Church, states the same expressly ⁷, while alleging the statement of Pope Innocent, and the direction in the Roman Breviary, (that the prayers said at the hours" on fast-days should be used on the week-days in Advent,) in proof of a *former practice* (consuevisse) of the Roman Church. An incidental proof, at the same time, that at Rome also the Advent fast was once daily.

Such, then, being the character of the Advent fast, its observance would naturally rise and fall in different centuries and different countries, according to the state of religious fervor and earnestness, or ac-

⁴ loc. cit.

⁵ "Consuetudinaliter." De Canon. Velitern. Reform. Opp. t. 3, p. 262.

⁶ Decret. Greg. iii. Tit. 46, cap. [2] Consilium ; or Innoc. III. Constitt. L. iii. Const. 141.

⁷ De Bon. Opp. ii. 20. See below, p. xviii.

cording to the degree in which it was originally impressed upon the habits of each Church. Among ourselves, slight traces only have been noticed, although, beyond all doubt, S. Egbert, and the good Bishop, the successor of S. Cuthbert, were not alone in this, "the Island of Saints." The Spanish Church seems, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, to have lost almost all memory of it. "Different persons," writes the Archbishop of Braga⁸ to Pope Innocent III., "think differently; some, but the fewer, saying that it is a duty to fast, the more part maintaining that they are not bound to it." In the middle of the sixteenth century, a Spanish writer of great authority⁹, treating expressly of the fasts of the Church, takes no notice whatever of that of Advent, as though wholly disused. In Germany the Council of Seligstadt (A. 1022), shortening the period to fourteen days, requires abstinence only "from flesh and blood;" that of Salzburg (A. 1281) had to enforce it even upon monastic bodies (can. 3). In Italy, early in the tenth century, the fast of Advent appears contracted to four weeks, and reduced to abstinence and continence only. Ratherius, Bishop of Verona—whose discipline and rebuke of sin, austere than his clergy or his king would bear, made him thrice an exile from the Bishoprics of Verona

⁸ Quoted by Martene.

⁹ Covarruvia Varr. Resolutt. iv. 20. He is quoted as fully treating the whole subject, in the marg. of the Decretals. "He was employed with Buoncompagno under Greg. XIII., to prepare the Decrees of Reformation at the Council of Trent."

and of Liege, so that at last he died in retirement in his own monastery¹—attempted to require no more². Yet in the beginning of the thirteenth century Innocent III. mentions it as the existing practice at Rome³. “Amongst us, fast is kept in the Advent of the LORD also.” Of Italy, that seems especially to be true, which has been said more generally of the whole Western Church⁴, that the decay of strictness as to Advent dates from the unhappy time when the Roman see was removed to Avignon (A. 1305). Urban V., in his own court, thought it best to enforce abstinence only. “Wishing⁵ that the ecclesiastics of his court should so live as to be an example to others; as soon as he was created Pope, he ordained, with penal sanctions, that they all should abstain from flesh during Advent, and *wished* that seculars also in the court should be comprehended in this.” S. Charles Borromeo, (A. 1560) in his Fourth Provincial Council, enjoined fasting in the families of his diocesan “at least⁶ on the Wednesdays and Fridays in

¹ Cave, Scriptt. Eccl. t. ii. A. 926.

² Ep. Synod. ad Presbyt. in D’Achery, Spicil. t. 2.

³ loc. cit.

⁴ Baillet, l. c. Benedict XIV. l. c. Ralph de Piso, of Tongeren, a writer at the close of the fourteenth century (1390), says, “Among the Romans, there is a fast in Advent also” (De Canon. Observant. c. 16); but he seems only to have transcribed the words of Pope Innocent III., since the word “etiam,” which in Pope Innocent refers to the Vigils of the Apostles, on which he had also been consulted, has nothing in the context to refer to.

⁵ Rainald, A. 1370, n. 22.

⁶ Concil. Prov. iv. in the Acta Eccl. Mediol. p. 169.

Advent," and that "the Holy Eucharist should be received weekly, according to the decree of Pope Sylverius, especially by the Clergy or by those more earnest after the spiritual life;" and in his regulations for his own family, he provides, "that Lenten⁷ food should be used through Advent, according to the ancient practice of Ecclesiastics." At the same date, Card. Bellarmine, in another part of Italy, asserts that it was "kept by many," but as an act of private piety; and so (as the expression implies, and as is man's wont,) neglected of most. "The practice⁸ of the Church attests very plainly, that the Advent fast is observed by many, not of precept, but of counsel or devotion." In the last century (A. 1731), Benedict XIV. (as Archbishop of Bologna, before his elevation,) was obliged to give up fasting and abstinence, as being peculiar to conventual bodies of both sexes, and to apply himself only to obtain any observance of Advent. He set himself⁹ against "the rash and scandalous sentiment too largely prevailing among the uninstructed people, or Christians of no great devotion, that Advent *altogether* had no reference except to such" bodies. There is earnestness enough in his words to imply, that he would have restored more if he could; as it was, he only pointed back to earlier and stricter days. Yet, among the Regulars of his day the fast was still observed; some "beginning¹⁰ from S. Martin's," and so keeping the

⁷ Art. v. Instit. Famil. Archiep. ib. p. 812.

⁸ loc. cit.

⁹ Inst. xi. init.

¹⁰ For the fact, he quotes Card. Cozza, Tract. dogm. et moral. de jejuniis, p. ii.

whole ancient Lent of the season; "some from S. Catherine's" (Nov. 25), and so exactly four weeks before the Vigil of the Nativity; "some from the first Sunday in Advent, some from All Saints."

The fullest notices, however, of the Advent fast, the greatest strictness, and the most enduring perseverance are found in that Church, in which are its earliest records, and with whose great Saint, S. Martin, its strictest form is bound up. In this way, also, did the Church of France derive a blessing from the memory of her Saint, which she cherished. Periods of neglect are indeed implied by the regulations of the Councils of Clermont (A. 1095) and Avranches (A. 1172), yet even in these the course is towards restoration, the later being the stricter. For the Council of Clermont, while retaining a strict rule as to Lent, and giving rules as to other fasts, omits all mention of any at Advent, while it does require that in this period "the peace of God" should be kept; in that of Avranches, although later, "fasting and abstinence" are "enjoined to all capable of it, especially to the Clergy and the higher ranks¹." (Can. 11.) At this very time, one eminent instance implies at once the strict obligation of the fast, its extent, and its severity. Louis VII. having obtained a relaxation as to ordinary fasting, applied (as appears from the answer) to Pope Alexander III. to know whether this relaxation extended to "*the Lents*." Alexander, in reply², allows one dish (*ferculum*) of fish, and

¹ "Militibus," according to its meaning in later Latin. See Du Fresne s. v. Baillet renders "gentils-hommes."

² Ep. 114, ap. Du Chesne, Hist. Franc. Scriptt. t. iv. p. 608.

wine in moderation, on the Friday, during the beginning of the season as counted from S. Martin's, but during the four weeks of Advent (as then reckoned at Rome) and Lent, the king was to observe the usual abstinence. The Epistle is concluded with a fatherly admonition, that, since he could not fast, he should be the more bountiful to the poor. "Woe to us," subjoins Martene, "whose times and habits are so unlike theirs." Yea, twice woe to us, who have neither their self-denying strictness, nor their bountifulness! And although the Council of Avranches speaks chiefly of the higher ranks, yet about the middle of the same century, an historian³ remarks it as one of the heavy consequences of the strictness of a siege, that "*many* of the soldiery violated the due observance of the Advent of the Lord." "Thus," he adds, "evils thickened on every side." Even relaxations give occasion to the mention of prevailing strictness. Thus, at the beginning of the same century, S. Peter the Venerable, the ninth Abbot of Cluny (A. 1123), in forming a milder rule, prohibits the use of lard during this season, even on festivals, or a second meal even on the Feast of S. Thomas, adding, "Seeing⁴ that on these days a more than wonted abstinence *is*, in order to prepare for the Nativity of the Lord, observed by nearly the whole Church, let ours consecrate, at least with moderate fasts, these hallowed days, which *many others* consecrate with greater." To the

³ Ordericus Vitalis, A. 1140. (Hist. Eccl. l. xii. A. 1118. ap. Du Chesne, Hist. Normann. Scriptt.)

⁴ Stat. 15 in the Biblioth. Cluniac. p. 1349.

same date belongs William, Bishop of Auxerre, who, when now old, during his last illness, and amid extreme exertion, kept this long fast daily "with only Lenten food ⁵." It was, then, with recent examples, and continuing them on, (not, as has been said, as something new,) that S. Louis (in other ways also, sitting on a throne with an ascetic's heart) still kept the "three Lents, abstaining on Fridays even from fish, and passing the whole Advent season in fasting and prayer ⁶." The observance of the Advent fast is incidentally noticed at the very close of this century ⁷, and the notice of the "perverseness" of a single presbyter, "who would not fast either in Advent or Lent, or on other fast days ⁸," as well as its being ranked with Lent, implies the general observance. To the same period belong the latest instances of strictness given by Martene in monastic bodies, but some of the most stringent and austere reforms were much later. Of those, also, who did not abstain from flesh wholly, the fast of S. Martin is mentioned, *e. g.* by later Commentators ⁹, as binding on the *Fratres Minores*, "from the Feast of All-Saints to the Nativity of our LORD, under pain of mortal sin." In the third order of S. Francis of Paula, instituted A. 1506, for persons living in the world, abstinence, with fasts on Wednesdays and Fridays, is prescribed

⁵ About A. 1181. Hist. Episc. Antissiod. c. 57. (Labbe, Biblioth. Nov.)

⁶ Rainault. A. 1297. n. 64. S. Louis died A. 1270.

⁷ Durand, A. 1286. See above.

⁸ Chron. Senon. v. 2. (A. 1258) ap. Mart.

⁹ Kazenberger, Lib. Vitæ, c. 3. q. 3. (A. 1733.)

for the last ten days before the Vigil of the Nativity, "an¹ abridgment," it is said, "of the Advent of the Regulars, of which it is one-fourth." In the beginning of the fifteenth century, the complaint of Chancellor Gerson is, perhaps, to be received with some allowance (as in the case of most who speak indignantly against the degeneracy of their age); yet he speaks as if the fast was almost wholly lost among ecclesiastics also; "where," he says², "is it to be found, that Priests fast during the Advent of CHRIST?" For the Church of France appears to have retained it in good degree, even at the end of the seventeenth century, to judge from the report of one who, in making it, owns himself her "adversary." "I do not see that among us, *i. e.* in France, our adversaries" (Daillé³ could so write in reference to a religious observance) "either enjoin or observe this fast less accurately or religiously than any other."

In the Greek Church the Advent fast began, there can be no doubt, at least as early as it is mentioned in the Latin, with which it was then visibly one. And whatever be the degradation of that portion, which the West has allowed to be oppressed by Infidels, the West has yet to learn from its enduring strictness. In

¹ La règle du Tiers-Ordre des Minimes, c. 5.

² De modo vivendi omnium fidelium, A. 1411. Opp. t. i. p. 405.

³ De jejun. p. 743. In the same place, Daillé inveighs against Bellarmine, as though he wished to conceal that "this fast was wholly unknown to the ancients, and depended entirely on the authority of later Bishops of Rome;" with how much justice, it will have appeared!

the latter part of the sixth century (A. 561) it also had its three Lents⁴, corresponding to those of the Western Church ; and these of such antiquity, that, although then much disputed, Apostolic origin could be claimed for them. A distinction, however, was then gaining ground, and the great Lent alone was ascribed to the Apostles, the others were attributed to "certain monks," who, it is said, "fasted these two fasts." The question, however, was then recent ; and so firmly were the fasts fixed, that Anastasius, Patriarch of Antioch, an eminent defender of truth and holiness, felt himself justified in declaring their opponents "opponents of the ordinances of God." The laxity had crept in lately and silently, both as to the length and the mode of fasting⁵, first among laymen, and more recently into the higher orders of Ecclesi-

⁴ That of St. Philip (which began on the following day, Nov. 15), then called more commonly that of the Nativity of the LORD, [Anastas. says, "which *some* call that of St. Philip"] and that of the holy Apostles ("which precedes the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul," Jun. 29) beginning in the week after Pentecost. Anastas. Sinait. de trib. quadrages. Coteler. Eccl. Gr. Monum. p. 426.

⁵ "Of late especially there hath crept in privily among some of us, not laymen only and unknown and unlearned persons, but *now* also among persons who lay great claim to knowledge—Bishops, Metropolitans, priests, and deacons." p. 425-6.

"Some of these opposers of the ordinances of God abstain for eighteen days from meat only, and butter and eggs ; some from meat only ; eating the rest, except on one day ; others abstain in the same manner for twelve days only, some for six, and others for four ; and they are not content with being deceived alone, but draw to them also multitudes of private persons." Ib. 426.

astics. The older discipline was enforced a few years later, by Joannes Jejunator⁶, the Patriarch of Constantinople (A. 585); and lay persons, among whom chiefly the laxity had found place, were prohibited from "eating meat during the two Lents of St. Philip and of the Holy Apostles." Towards the close of the fourteenth century (the date of its decay in the Western Church) the obligation is relaxed; the practice at least, except among the unreligious, does not seem much to have been altered. For although Balsamon (A. 1280) speaks of its consisting of seven days⁷, this is unquestionably to be understood of what was obligatory; for Balsamon himself attests⁸, that at Constantinople "the monks, and most of the inhabitants, kept a continued fast from the Feast of All Saints (with them a moveable feast immediately after Pentecost) unto that of St. Peter and St. Paul, ("although not exactly forty days, but longer or shorter," as being regulated by Easter,) "and forty other days before the Nativity of CHRIST and God, in conformity with the Typicon."

Two other periods of fasting, those before the Transfiguration and the Dormitio S. Deiparæ, he enjoins expressly in the abridged form of seven days; with reference to those longer, he says, "the Churches are by the grace of God advancing to a holier condition; ye ought then so to fast." It appears⁹, also,

⁶ Pœnitential. p. 89. ap. Dufresne v. *τεσσαρακονθήμερον*.

⁷ Resp. 53. ad quæst. Marci Patr. Alex. ap. Leuncl. Jur. Gr. Rom. lv. t. ii. 388.

⁸ Epist. de Jejun. c. 22. ap. Cotelier. Ecol. Gr. Monum. t. ii. 510.

⁹ Ib. c. 25.

that there was this gradation between these seasons of fasting, that the great Lent, as being of Divine institution, was allowed to give way to no bodily infirmity; of the Advent fast, and that after Pentecost, the last week only was of rigid observance: the remainder might, "with" specific "Episcopal sanction be, for any bodily weakness, remitted;" the remaining festivals had the briefer fast of seven days only annexed. Balsamon adds, "to break any one of these days without such sanction is dangerous and destructive." The very negligence of some "indifferent persons" shows the same gradation; they kept¹ the Paschal Lent inviolate, abridged the two others to four days; of the fast of the two remaining they "would not even hear." Balsamon states² further, that there were, although comparatively slight, indications of these fasts in their rituals, the Jerusalem and Studitic Typicon, (a book of directions for reciting the Office), and also in the Henosis. Of these the Jerusalem Typicon was composed by Sabas (A. 484), and restored by Joann. Damascene³ (A. 730); the Stu-

¹ Ib. c. 23. Balsamon, throughout this Epistle, distinguishes the Paschal Lent from the others, as of Divine institution, more impressed upon the Church, and inviolable. This explains what he says elsewhere, that there was "*properly* only one Lent," (ad Can. 52. Conc. Trull.) which has been misunderstood, even by Menard, (Nott. ad Sacram. S. Greg. p. 217.) as though he meant to say, that there was only one such period altogether, and so that the Advent Lent did not then exist.

² Loc. cit.

³ Symeon Thessal. Resp. ad Quæstt. Gabriel. Pentapol. Metrop. ap. Suicer. v. *τυπικόν*.

ditic was after the beginning of the ninth⁴, the Henosis was completed in the tenth century⁵. The subsequent evidence goes the same way, implying, that these were real periods of forty days. Thus Symeon Thessalon.⁶ (A. 1420) says, "the Paschal is called 'the great Lent,' because there are others, but this is of highest dignity." Codinus (A. 1460) relates how on Christmas Day the Archipresbyter, or some other priest, blessed the Emperor's meal, "the forty days being now passed, and meat resumed⁷." Gregorius Proto.-Syncellus (A. 1459), when alleging variations, only says⁸, "some begin on Nov. 15th (the full fast), some on Dec. 6th, some on Dec. 20th⁹." Later still, Nov. 15th is marked in the *Anthologium Novum*¹ (A. 1634) as "the beginning of the fasts of the Nativity." Our own countryman, Smith (A. 1678), speaks of the length of these fasts², and is much impressed with the beneficial effect of them. To them, with their festivals, by the aid of Divine Grace, he attributes mainly the very preservation of Christianity from total extinction amid the manifold oppressions

⁴ It was so called from the great monastery built in the suburbs of Constantinople by the Consul Studius, who died A. 826.

⁵ Under Constantine Porphyrog. Balsamon, l. c.

⁶ Resp. 57, ap. Du Fresne.

⁷ De Off. Eccl. et Cur. Const. c. vii. § 20.

⁸ Cont. Marc. Ephes. in Concil. Florentin. t. ii. p. 397.

⁹ This date gives the "four days," above mentioned, as the fast of some negligent persons, the Vigil of our LORD's Nativity not being counted, (p. xxiii. n. 5.)

¹ Arcudii ἀνθολ. νέον, in Mens. Novemb.

² De Eccl. Gr. Stat. hod. pp. 36. 38.

and temptations to despair and apostasy³. Christopher Angelus, himself a Greek, at the same date, enters into like detail as to the length of the three⁴

³ "I learnt, at length, as an eye-witness, that, with the aid of Divine Grace, the solemn celebration of fasts and festivals has hindered the defection of the whole East from the Christian Faith. By this, if not as the only, at least the chief means, the religion of CHRIST still triumphs over so many most cruel machinations. For when these festivals return, to which they throng in dense multitudes with a holy emulation, by these festivals the history of the Birth, Death, Resurrection of CHRIST, and all the Mysteries which make up the sum of the Faith, are more readily brought to mind, &c. (pp. 14, 15.) (P. 27.) "The stated times of yearly or weekly fasts contribute not a little to preserve among the people the remains of the Christian Faith. To these they adhere most scrupulously, and are animated with such devotion in their observance, that they would think it a very heavy sin to transgress the Church's laws herein. Long habit in part, in part devotion, have so subdued their cravings, that so far from complaining of the great length of the fasts, however severe, they would rather believe that religion itself would be in risk of utterly perishing in time, if these rigorous fasts were even somewhat relaxed, and that out of regard to human infirmity. Nor would this apprehension be easily removed." See also p. 40.

⁴ Anastasius Sinait. (de 3 quadr. fin.) says that the fast of the holy Apostles was formerly kept up to the Dormitio S. Deip., but that it was broken through to avoid the concurrence with heretical and even Mohammedan fasts, or, as he thinks, partly through laxity, and resumed at the beginning of August. According to this, the fasts of the holy Apostles, of the Transfiguration, and of the Dormitio B. M. V., were originally one, which came to be broken through at two intervals, the feast of St. Peter and St. Paul at the end of June, and the Feast of the Transfiguration (Aug. 6), and closing altogether as before (Aug. 15). The Fast of the Transfiguration and the

fasts. "The⁵ second quadragesimal period is so called, because they fast forty days before the Birth of CHRIST. They fast on these days, first, in honour of CHRIST; secondly, because Moses fasted forty days, and was then found worthy to speak with God, and receive the Tables, as an ensample for us. Then Moses fasted forty days in order to speak with God and receive the Tables. We now fast the same number of days, that we may meet CHRIST, born for our sins, as did the Magi with gifts; and as the shepherds spake with Angels, and were found worthy to see 'a multitude of the heavenly host,' and to worship CHRIST, we too confessing our sins and fasting, and 'bringing our body into captivity,' may worship CHRIST." Preparation for the "holy mysteries," which is here probably included, is by others expressly mentioned, as one chief end of those long fasts, "that the⁶ flesh being brought into servitude by this

Dormitio being broken only by the one day of the Feast of the Transfiguration, the fast is either counted as two of a week each as by Balsamon (above), or one of a fortnight (as in Smith and Angelus), and the periods of fasting (exclusive of the Paschal Lent) are counted as four (as by Balsam. l. c. and Resp. 53), or three, in Isaac Cathol. (perhaps about A. 1150, Combef. Auct. Nov. ii. 317); Joann. Citrius (A. 1203, ap. Leo Allat. de Consens. Eccl. iii. 12. 5.); the Typicon, Horologium (ap. Cotel. Monum. t. ii. p. 687); Anastas. Caesar. (ap. Cotel. Mon. t. iii. p. 433); S. Nico (ib. p. 439); Smith and Angelus, l. c. The older penitentials of Joann. Jejun. (Morinus, p. 89); Joann. Monach. (ib. p. 113) mention the fast of the holy Apostles, not that of the Blessed Virgin. A writer (ib. p. 437) says that the festival of the Transfiguration was introduced in the time of Leo, the philosopher, A. 886.

⁵ c. 5.

⁶ Smith, p. 40.

hard treatment⁷, the mind, freed from the heavy weight which bowed it to the earth, might seek heaven more freely, and be more open for the things of God; and luxury and dissoluteness being banished through these most rigid acts of penitence, they may with greater increase of piety and fruit be refreshed with the heavenly Feast of the Body and Blood of JESUS CHRIST." When Communion in the Greek Church was not more frequent, (as in the Roman Church it is required once, by the rules of our own, three times only,) it was so arranged that the three Communions should be at the close of three Lents⁸. How great the fruit of so solemn a preparation cannot be estimated. "At the end of the forty days there arriveth," says Anastasius Sinaita⁹, "the saving Nativity of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, whence these two benefits result. We fulfil the tradition of

⁷ Of the mode of observing the fast before Christmas, Smith says (p. 37), "although they must abstain entirely from flesh, butter, and eggs, yet they may use fish, wine, and oil, so that this fast, compared with the great Lent, is accounted altogether mild and easy to be borne." "During the whole forty-eight days of their Lent, they abstain from all meat, fish (except shell fish), eggs, cheese, or any thing of milk, and the more religious, especially the priests and monks, deny themselves the wine and oil allowed on Saturdays and Sundays" (p. 28). Angelus says, that in the two Lents after Pentecost and before the Nativity of our LORD, they may have two meals, with fish.

⁸ Thus in the Henosis, the thrice married are limited to the three festivals at the close of three great fasts, "because a fast precedes in these, and for the benefit arising from this [the fast]." Morinus mentions the same, l. c. p. 124.

⁹ l. c. Cotel. iii. 430.

the Apostles, and are purified beforehand to meet and worship Him Who was born undefiledly and ineffably of the holy and ever-Virgin Mother of God, JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD."

Such being attested to be the value of this long fast in the Greek Church, even amid its heavy degradations and oppressions, the Western must have undergone a sore loss from its disuse. Baillet, (even in the French Church, which maintained the fast most faithfully,) says, at the close of the seventeenth century, "The ¹⁰ Roman Church, followed by most of those of the West, had formerly Epistles and Gospels for the Holy Communion on those days in each week of Advent, which were specially set apart as fasting days. But it has now, for above a century, abandoned this practice. Those days set apart for fasting and public prayer, were the Wednesday and Friday in each week." The present condition of the Western Church, Guéranger sums up in the words, "The ¹¹ external practices of penitence, which formerly in the West consecrated the Advent season, have been gradually relaxed, so that there are now no traces of them out of the monasteries."

In our own Church, at the time when we ceased to be in visible communion with the rest of the Christian family, the same negligence probably prevailed as in other parts of the West. Indeed, it is confessed on all hands, that the period immediately antecedent to that event, was "an evil time." And, since strictness and joy are inseparable, so, as we made no effort

¹⁰ l. c. p. 266.

¹¹ l. c. p. 6.

to recover Christian strictness, we laid aside all the tokens and expressions of Christian joy. For the period of Advent, as expressed in the services or ceremonial of the Church, was (as it must in truth ever be) a season of mingled joy and awe. It blends in one His characters of Redeemer and Judge, His coming in humility and in Majesty, His secret coming now in grace to the childlike heart, or to the penitent becoming again as a little child ; His future manifest coming to be glorified in His Saints, but to judge every man according to his works. "The Advent of the LORD," says Durand ¹, "is celebrated for four weeks, because fourfold is the Advent of the Son of God ; but the last week is never concluded ², because the glory of the Saints, which shall be given at the last Advent, namely, at the Judgment, shall come to no close. The first Advent is in the Flesh taken in the Virgin's womb, of which it is said, 'Hosanna to the Son of David ; blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the LORD.' The second is

¹ l. c.

² "Because the Vigil of the Nativity does not belong to Advent, but to the time of joy ; as appears from the arrangement itself of Gregory, who assigned the last Antiphones of Advent out of the Gospel, viz. 'the days are accomplished,' and, 'Behold, all things are accomplished.'" [The last two Antiphones for Matins on the last Friday in Advent in the *Liber Antiphon. of S. Gregory*, t. iii. p. 740, ed. Ben. The last is still the Antiph. to the Benedictus on the last day in Advent in the *Roman Breviary* ; see *Tract 75*, p. 205.] Thus, then, even if Christmas Day falls on a Sunday, the fourth week is not completed, since Saturday, its Vigil, is the beginning of Christmas, not the close of Advent.

in the mind, whereby He cometh down daily in the hearts of the faithful, through the HOLY SPIRIT, of which it is said, (Joh. xiv.) 'We will come unto him, and make our abode with him;' and (Wisd. ix.) 'LORD, send forth Thy Wisdom, that It may be with me.' Of these we have in Habakkuk, (c. ii.) 'If He tarrieth, wait for Him; for coming He shall come, and will not tarry.' The third Advent is at the death of each, of which St. James saith, 'Be ye patient unto the Coming of the LORD,' (c. v.), and Luke xii. 'If the master of the house knew what hour the thief would come,' &c., 'therefore be ye also ready,' &c., and, again, 'If he shall come in the first watch,' i. e. in youth, 'or in the second,' &c., 'and find you so,' i. e. in penitence, 'blessed are those servants.' The fourth shall be in Majesty, which shall be in the Day of Judgment. Of this we read, (Is. iii.) 'The LORD shall come to judgment with the elders of His people.' And observe that the first Advent freed souls from the slavery of the devil; the second freeth them from sin; the third from punishment; the fourth freeth their bodies. Yet the Church celebrateth two Advents only, namely, in the Flesh and to Judgment. For she counteth the first and second as one; for He therefore came in the Flesh, that He might come in the mind; wherefore it is said, 'Coming He shall come, and shall not tarry;' 'coming,' i. e. in the Flesh, 'He shall come,' i. e. in the mind. And, again, both of these are in mercy. In like way, the third and fourth are regarded as one, because both are in justice, and in effect one. The Church then celebrates the

Advent as twofold, that she may engender in her children fear and love, whence in the Psalm, (xix.) 'The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring for ever,' and His Love in like way shall endure for ever; for 'charity never faileth.' (1 Cor. xiii.) But we owe Him fear as a Lord, love as a Father; whence Malachi, (c. ii.) 'If I am a Father, where is My love? and if the LORD, where is My fear?' " We have been redeemed, and therefore we must joy; we have to give account, who may not stand in awe? Yet that we may not stand in fear then, we must look with longing, reverential, penitent awe now.

The Church, then, of old fasted, mingled penitence in her services, laid aside her splendid dresses³, employed purple, or sometimes even black⁴ (as with us in Lent), celebrated the Holy Eucharist with the rites of Lent (an ordinance of the sixth century⁵, now long⁶ disused); the *Gloria in excelsis* was from old time (we are told⁷ in the ninth century) suspended, "that it might be resumed with more fervour of devotion⁸ when the Church should sing it anew with the glad Angels in the night of the Nativity of our LORD." The "Te Deum" was suspended during this period, at a somewhat later date⁹, as though the

³ See below, n. 9.

⁴ Martene, l. c. § 12.

⁵ Council of Maçon, 1st can. 9.

⁶ Baillet, l. c. speaking immediately of France at the end of the seventeenth century.

⁷ Amalarius, ii. 40.

⁸ Belet, de Div. Off. c. 43. Durand, vi. 2.

⁹ Amalarius (de Off. iii. 40) and Micrologus (A. 1082) mention the omission of the "Gloria in excelsis" only. Of the

Church were, amid the growth of evil, gradually deepening her tokens of the absence of her LORD, as Advent became more the type of her actual state; it is omitted, "because¹ He is not yet come Whom we look for, and this is said to " Him "as present." The words "Ite, missa est," came also to be omitted at the close of the Communion, because Advent denotes² "that time when the joy of peace was yet looked for," [before our LORD's coming,] "and that also wherein we now still anxiously look for the consummation of our salvation. "The proses³ or sequences which it is the received custom to sing before the Gospel in token of joy, are on the same ground suppressed." In the ninth century, "the Gospels," it was said⁴, "announce not sadness but joy. What else announce they than the triumphs

Te Deum, Amalarius only says, that "in *some* Churches, in Advent as in Septuagesima and Lent, the Te Deum was omitted by the Clergy, as also the Gloria in excelsis; but that this custom was not at all observed by the monastic order, as neither by some Churches of the Canons." (Suppl. ad L. iv. Mabillon, Anal. t. ii. ap. p. 114.) The monks of S. Benedict, when questioned as to their use, pleaded S. Benedict's rule, in whose time, consequently, it had not been laid aside. Martene, § 16. Rupertus (A. 1111) mentions the omission of the "Ite, missa est," not of the "Te Deum." In like way, Amalarius says, that the rich dress, "the dalmatic, is *in some places* laid aside" at that season; as does Micrologus: in the time of Rupertus, it had become universal.

¹ Durand. l. c.

² Rupert. iii. 2.

³ Martene, l. c. § 9. In a Roman missal (Paris, Regnault, A. 1530), there is a Prose "for LORD's Days in Advent."

⁴ Amalarius, Anal. l. c. "Whence," he proceeds, "on ac-

of CHRIST, and the joy of the Church?" All these, and others of the same character, were disused, and others substituted, speaking of awe and penitence. On the other hand, penitential responses were added at every service, praying for conversion, mercy, help; and the two Psalms, which ever come to the lips of the penitent, "Have mercy upon me" (Ps. li.), and "Out of the deep have I called upon thee" (Ps. cxxx.), were, day by day, during the week, morning and evening⁵, the mourning voice count of those same triumphant days of the coming gladness of the Nativity, are the Psalms, 'The LORD hath reigned,' and those which begin with Halleluiah. For the lessons of the labourers in the vineyard called by the Master, and the parables of the seed, and the blind receiving sight, a type of the world enlightened by the REDEEMER, and the devil in three temptations vanquished by CHRIST in His fast, also of the cure of the daughter of the believing Canaanitess, and of the casting forth the devil from the dumb and deaf who was possessed, also of the five thousand fed with the five loaves and two fishes, what else announce they," &c. Of these lessons, that of the feeding of the multitudes is mentioned in the Comes; also another lesson of the same character, the cure of Peter's wife's mother, and other sick (Matt. viii. 14, sqq.) But here there are others, now disused, of preparation and strictness; the sending of the seventy (Luke x.), the command to watch and pray (Mark xiii. 33)."

⁵ The 130th at Lauds (in which the 51st is always used on week-days), the 51st again at Vespers. In the Ordinary at Tours, the 51st Psalm is used after five other hours; Terce (with the 86th and the 67th), Sext (with the 57th), Nones (with the 146th), and Compline (with the 146th); in all, "seven times a day." In an ancient ritual of the Church at S. Martin, the following Psalms were added daily: 4, 5, 6, 13, 23, 25, 27, 30, 32, 41, 42, 54, 65, 67, 70, 79, 83, 86, 120, 121, 123, 130, 146. Martene, l. c. § xvii.

of the Church. And yet, besides the joy of penitence, some of these, understood in the full sense of the ancient Church, had in them the special longing of Advent, as the prayer "Show the Light of Thy Countenance and we shall be whole," is a prayer for His coming, Who is the True Light of the world; and the whole 130th Psalm is a longing, out of the depth of our misery, for the depth of His Mercy, even for Him, "the Word" we look for, "the Mercy," Who is "with God," in the Bosom of the FATHER.

Yet tones of joy were not, as in Lent, altogether excluded: "Because it is in part a time of joy, the 'Halleluiah' is not suppressed, as in Septuagesima, which is wholly a time of sorrow⁶." They were replaced also not by those prayers of penitence only, but by others, full of longing expectation, anticipating love, sympathy with the Church before His coming (in that to us also He is not fully come), yet certainty of His coming to His Church, and of the salvation, glory, light, peace, joy, which He shall bring with Him, as being Himself our Joy, our Light, our Peace, our Salvation, and the Glory of His Saints. These were a key-note, as it were, to the whole service, in themselves of intense beauty, and well nigh overpowering and overwhelming the soul, with the sense of His Presence, Whose Coming they announce in the words of prophecy, or Whom they pray "not to tarry." They lead the soul into the inner chambers

⁶ Beleth. c. 64. The Halleluiah is now directed to be omitted on week-days, when the Sunday service is used. Miss. Rom. Dom. i. Adv.

of the meaning of Holy Scripture, being, as they are, the expression of the united sense of the ancient Church; they attune her to accord with that sacred harmony, which runs along the seven-stringed lyre of Holy Scripture, and ever sounding, wherever it is touched, with His Name, Whom histories foreshadowed, prophecy promised, Psalms prayed that He would "make no long tarrying, O our God."

Beautiful as this system is and was, it would seem that, without strictness of life, it was too beautiful, and (as being the expression of Holy Scripture) too Divine, to be real to those who were living ordinary lives. They are the intense expressions of those, in whose thoughts the SAVIOUR ever is, who can, with truth, say, "My soul is athirst for God, for the living God; when shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?" It has, then, been permitted that they should be withdrawn from the later Church; from the Roman, in that they are still left "in a language not understood by the people;" from our own, in that they who compiled our Liturgy, so full in its penitential parts, did not appreciate them. Rather, since we have every where to look away from man's agency to the overruling Providence of God, He, we may hope, foreseeing the especial needs of our people, has impressed upon us lessons of obedience, and given us the language of penitents; which, when we have learned, He will bestow upon us, as He has promised, whatever we shall ask for.

This character of our Liturgy, on the whole, was pointed out some years past with much reverential

thought⁷. It is mentioned here only to illustrate the character of our Advent, how, other strictness having been laid aside, God in His Providence has supplied us with a sharp warning voice. The question relates entirely to Holy Scripture (of which the Antiphones also are adaptations); and slight as the changes sometimes are, yet it is remarkable that they all tend in one direction. Thus the Epistles and Gospels are exactly the same as in the Sarum Missal, with one slight exception, that whereas the Epistle and Gospel both closed with words about our LORD, "Put ye on the LORD JESUS CHRIST⁸," and "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the LORD," and so left words of joy on the ear, we have added to both words of warning to ourselves; to the Epistle, "and make not provision for the flesh," &c.; to the Gospel, to our LORD's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the relation how He cast out those who sold and bought in His FATHER'S house. In the first lessons for the Sundays, the lessons peculiar to ourselves are the close of the second and the twenty-fourth chapters of Isaiah⁹, which are awful prophecies of the terror and utter destruction of the Day of Judgment, and the

⁷ Tract 86.—"Indications of a superintending Providence in the Preservation of the Prayer-book, and in the changes which it has undergone."

⁸ To the Epistle we have also prefixed the portion containing the commandments, and that love is the fulfilling of the law. In the Sarum Missal, (and even in an English service, A. 1538) it begins, "Knowing the time."

⁹ The portion of the twenty-fourth in the Breviary closes, "We have heard songs, glory to the righteous;" we have returned to the terrors of the Day of Judgment.

thirty-second, of mingled promise and threatening: "Tremble, ye that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones: strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins." What, again, is the main subject of each? Of the Gospels, the Entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the Temple for the first, distress and fear in the Day of Judgment, for the second; on the third and fourth, the preaching of the austere Baptist to prepare His way. Of the Epistles, the first is on "casting away the works of darkness" and obedience to the law; for the second, which has joy, our Collect turns our thoughts chiefly to "hope through *patience* and *comfort* of God's word;" the third is again on the Day of Judgment, the fourth only of joy and peace, but the Collect with which it is ushered in, is of deepest penitence, so much stronger than that¹⁰ from which it is taken, "whereas through our sins and wickedness we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us." Again, while our Sunday Lessons for Advent are taken out of the early part of Isaiah, we have reserved almost all the most joyous parts, of the triumphs and glory of CHRIST in His Church, for the few in comparison who may be most trusted with them, those who pay God the daily service, or ponder their appointed portion in private. Of those read in the Sunday Service, in three only does joy predominate, the twenty-fifth, the twenty-sixth, and the thirty-second. The first, fifth, and thirtieth, are full of woe on disobedience, with prophecies of the Day of Judgment, which is ex-

¹⁰ The original has simply "what our sins do hinder." See p. 267.

clusively the subject of the twentieth-fourth, and chiefly that of the second. And this character of earnest warning belongs to them the more, as they stand among us, because it is unrelieved. Mercy and judgment are everywhere joined together in Holy Scripture; every period of God's visitation hath both; He "visiteth and redeemeth His people," and He "visiteth the sins" of the heathen; "for judgment," He said, "I am come into the world." Hence even those portions of Holy Scripture, which have the brightest promise, have heavy words mingled with them, as in Isaiah xxxii., which begins with glad assurance of His protection, or the second chapter, which closes altogether in "the terrors of the LORD." I know not whether it is so, yet I should almost think, that until the mind has learnt the awfulness of Holy Scripture, there must often, at least in early life, be (if one may so speak reverently) a feeling of disappointment, in turning to the brighter pages of prophecy, when it finds how clouds and darkness encompass the bright light, and threatening or warning follow upon mercy and love; and I should suppose that very many, when they had heard a lesson even of "the Evangelic prophet" as we do, without a comment, must have risen with a feeling of trouble, almost in heaviness. This is said, not as wishing it otherwise, but in illustration of the character of our Services, which, from the very structure of prophecy, the "continual"¹ [*i. e.* continuous] "course of the reading of the Scripture," without "any of those

¹ Concerning the Service of the Church, Preface to the Common Prayer-Book.

things which did break" it, must of necessity bring with it. The Responses, as they occur in the Breviary, not only break Holy Scripture into short portions, such as the mind can contain more as a whole, but they form a beautiful and perpetual comment upon it, in this instance bringing back the mind from every word of terror, desolation, judgment, to "His great love wherewith He loved us," to Him "Who to them that look for Him shall appear the second time unto salvation." The heaviness of the woe or terror is immediately lightened¹² by words of encouragement and trust and promise, which show that the terrors do not belong to the true children of the Church, or direct to Whom to flee for shelter. This will best be seen by reference to the Advent Service, as already published¹ for our use, where it appears in every page in the "lessons." To give here two or three instances only; when woe is denounced on the sinful people, whose wounds have "neither been closed nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment," (Is. i.) there follow the responses² from Dan. vii. 13, 14, the vision of the Son of Man, Whose dominion shall not decay; when that desolation, by which the Church was well nigh "as Sodom and Gomorrah," the response repeats the message of the Angel Gabriel, of the Son of the Highest, Who shall reign over the house of Jacob for

¹² Not to speak now of that conclusion of all the lessons, "But Thou, O LORD, have mercy upon us." Ans. "Thanks be to God."

¹ Tract 75, p. 156, seqq.

² See Tract 75, p. 160. The same occur after the judgment on God's vineyard, Is. 5. See ib. p. 187.

ever ; when of the " smiting of the earth with the rod of His mouth," then follows the response³, " I will save and deliver thee ; fear not ;" when of the terrors of the Day of Judgment, there comes to relieve it, " Behold, a Virgin shall conceive ;" and when the lesson had ended, " therefore forgive them not," " Behold I come," it says, " the LORD your God, to visit you in peace." Such passages need not be multiplied ; for it would be to transfer here the whole Advent service ; yet thus much, then, on the whole, is clear, that in the change of our services, much which is awful was added ; when there was choice, chiefly the austerer portion was selected, directing us to the terrors of the Day of Judgment : and this impression is the more left on the soul, in that what in the original mitigated, or turned it into reverent joy, is omitted. This (one cannot, in these days, say too often) is not remarked in complaint. We have, we trust, what God saw, amid our neglect of discipline without and within, was fittest for us ; yet are they here also the sterner lessons of penitence and obedience, under which men of old betook themselves to self-denying ways, and severe discipline of body and mind, and so were the fitter to hear words of comfort and joy, and to wait for their LORD without fear.

It is not, then, with any longing for premature restoration, (much less should it be with impatient regret,) that either the strictness of the ancient Church, or the intense beauty and fervour of her devotions, have been here set forth. It is rather as an ideal of something altogether beyond most of us,

• ³ Ib. p. 186.

which may set us, at least, in the right way, and make us dread and limit the self-indulgences which our weak frames and weaker wills make necessary, and at least lay the foundation of humility, upon which alone can be raised whatever else of solid Christian graces God may, by His grace, enable us to rear. It is something, not indeed to congratulate ourselves because we can admire what we cannot do, but even though we do it not, and because we cannot, to feel ourselves below their feet. For what they of old did, they did not by nature but by grace; not merely because their frames were stronger, but because they were endued with strength not their own. But for us mostly, being what we are, it is of God's mercy, that in our own Church, as well as that of Rome⁴, the ancient severity has been mitigated. We have, most of us, been but learning to keep one Lent: what should we have to do with two or three? Fervour and earnestness is, as of all besides, the soul of

⁴ About twenty years ago the fasting-days in Advent in the Roman Communion in these islands were Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays; the Wednesday fast was then abrogated, and since, the ordinary "abstinence from meat," on Saturday; the Saturdays in Advent are retained as fasts, in place of the Vigils of Saints'-days, which, with the exception of two of the Blessed Virgin and St. Peter and St. Paul, are no longer enjoined, "under pain of sin," to be kept as Holy days. Their number of fasts (if we allow ourselves the same number of days for meat in Lent) will then be somewhat, but little, fewer than our own, which, in the inexperience of most of us, may be some sort of guide as to what our frames will, at all events, bear. These relaxations were made, I understand, in consequence of the peculiar circumstances of this country.

mortification also. The first step may mostly be to practise it as a duty ; we shall feel its value, when we obtain grace to love it. Yet, even thus, experienced spiritual writers^a say, that however valuable corporeal mortifications are, they who have the direction of souls should rather restrain them, that so they may be sought and practised with the greater fervour ; that the first in order are those within, the interior acts^b ; that the most useful, and those with least risk, are negative^c ; although it is added in the words of one^d who knew well whereof he was speaking : " Believe not one who disapproves of acts of penitence, even had he the gift of miracles." Truly, since it were to deny our LORD's words of taking up

^a See in the *Manuel des Confesseurs*, p. 281, sqq.

^b " *e. g.* Never to answer any censure, to say nothing which can turn to our advantage, to yield in arguments, to give way to the will of another whenever it may be done without spiritual detriment."—Ib.

^c " *e. g.* To refuse one's self to see or hear things out of curiosity, to speak little [except where it is matter of charity], to be contented with food not to our taste or ill flavoured ; not to warm one's self during winter [*i. e.* at once, or unless the frame requires it, cold being to some very dangerous] ; to choose the worst things ; to be glad if we have not something we even need ; not to complain of the inconvenience of the seasons, of contempt, persecutions, pains, or infirmities." " Especially inspire mortification of speech. Certain pious persons pay little attention to it. Yet it is, in reality, the most painful, and, at the same time, the most useful to the soul, and often even to the body. S. Philip Neri was wont to say, ' Whoso does not mortify speech will never arrive at perfection.' "—Ib.

^d St. John-of-the-Cross.—Ib.

our Cross, and the experience of all the Saints whom He has led by His Spirit to eminent holiness.

Yet while we follow such outward strictness as may be suited to our frames, and, at all events, while we are preparing for His coming to partake of our humility, and to be in want and poverty from His very Birth after our flesh, refuse ourselves all mere luxury, and ease, and self-indulgence, and distraction of spirit, it is by entering into the penitential spirit of our Liturgy, that these external rites most profit us. For the "purgative life," or that "wherein the soul labours to cleanse itself from its sins, and extirpate its vices and evil habits in their very sources and first principles," is the acknowledged foundation of the whole spiritual life, without which all spiritual feelings and sentiments and aspirations will become sickly, and unsteady, and delusive. It is then wonderful how, while all around us, who acted like ourselves, made themselves easy ways, and their boast was to be free from fear, we have received, as it were, without man's forethought, a Liturgy the most penitential in the whole Church. Our first object must be to learn its Advent fears; to listen to its preaching of the austere Baptist, that so we may come indeed to the "Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world."

And yet, if we know how to use our treasure, our Liturgy, which makes the Psalms in our own beautiful version the text-book of our devotions, cannot be wanting in all those Advent longings, when they become safe and necessary. For it is of the fulness of Holy Scripture, and (if we may venture to make

any comparison in things Divine) especially of this Divine Psalter, to give forth the sounds according as it is touched, not deeper only, or more full, but in various melody, in harmony with the thoughts of him who is taught to elicit them. The same Psalm, as the second, may speak of the Eternal Generation of the Son, or His Coming into the world, or His Resurrection from the dead, or His glory with the FATHER; the 110th speaks of His everlasting Priesthood, and His Birth hidden in the Womb of Eternity, His Mediatorial kingdom, His final Judgment, and the smiting of Anti-Christ; but also, in an undertone, of His drinking of the brook of our mortality and taking our human nature, and being, through humility, "exalted above every name;" so that, though full of glory, it too speaks of His Advent in humility.

"Almost every Psalm," says S. Athanasius⁹, "indicates the Coming of the Saviour, and that He Who should come is God. Thus, in the 50th, 'Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence,' and in the 118th, 'Blessed is He Who cometh in the Name of the LORD; Blessed are ye of the House of the LORD; God is the LORD, Who hath showed us light.' And that He is the Word of the FATHER, so singeth he in the 107th, 'He sent forth His Word and healed them, and saved them from their destruction.' For God Who cometh, Himself is also the Word Who was sent. And knowing this Word to be the Son of God, he uttereth the voice of the Father in the 45th,

⁹ Ep. ad Marcell. § 5. 6.

'My Heart hath brought forth a Good Word ;' and again, in the 110th, 'From the womb before the day-star begat I Thee,' [lit. from the womb of the morning is Thy Birth]; for Whom besides may one call the Begotten of God but His Word or His Wisdom? And whereas the Psalmist knew that He was the Word of God, He said in the 33rd, 'By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made.' Yea, he knew also CHRIST Himself Who should come, whereof he spake in the 45th; 'Thy Throne, O God, is for ever and ever,' &c. And lest any should think that He came not in our very flesh, He says that the Very Same shall be Man and He through Whom all things are made, saying, in the 87th, 'And of Mount Zion it shall be said, This Man was born in her, and Himself the Highest shall stablish her.' For this is the same as to say, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him.' Wherefore also knowing that He should be born of a Virgin, neither was he silent thereon, but gave some indication of it in the 45th; 'Hear, O Daughter, and consider and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house; for the King shall desire thy beauty, for He is thy LORD GOD.' For this is like what Gabriel said, 'Hail, full of grace, the LORD is with thee!' For having spoken of CHRIST Himself, He declared his human generation of a Virgin in the words, 'Hearken, daughter.' Gabriel, indeed, being of a race foreign to her's, calleth her by name, 'Mary,' but David addresseth her who should be of his seed, 'Daughter.' " And for ourselves, since all the ills of

this world, and the sins wherewith we are encompassed, and our feeling of infirmity, and our sighing or loud cries for deliverance, are the groans of nature and of grace, longing for and drawing from Heaven Him Who is Mercy and Salvation, the Word of the Father; then, Psalms which pray that He would "Arise and help us for His Mercy's sake," or contain that cry of the Church now, as heretofore, "How long¹?" or which complain of "the oppression² of the Enemy;" or profess faith and hope, "I have longed³ for Thy Salvation," "I have longed sore for Thy Word," "O that the Salvation of Israel would come⁴," "I have waited for Thy Word;" or pray that "God would send forth His Light⁵," or His "Mercy and Truth⁶;" or which declare that God Himself should be "the Refuge of the oppressed;" or that "He hath sent Redemption⁷ unto His people;" or that "God," or He Who is "Righteousness hath looked down⁸ from Heaven;" or that "the Sun⁹" of Righteousness "hath gone forth out of His chamber;" or that "He¹⁰ hath come down like the dew upon the mown grass:" even our decayed and dried nature, whereof "grass" is the very symbol,—what are all Psalms which cry for mercy, but the one varied voice

¹ Ps. vi. xiii. (and with them the ix. and x. looking on to the Day of Judgment.) Comp. Rev. vi. 10.

² Ps. xii. xiii. lxxix. &c.

³ As Ps. lxxxv. cvi. cxxx. and many expressions in Ps. cxix.

⁴ Ps. xiv. liii.

⁵ Ps. xliii. lxvii. (Ev. Serv.)

⁶ Ps. lvii. comp. Ps. cx. cxviii. 25. cxliv.

⁷ Ps. cxi. or Ps. xcvi. (Ev. Serv.) ⁸ Ps. xiv. lxxxv. cxiii.

⁹ Ps. xix.

¹⁰ Ps. lxxii.

of human nature sighing for Him, "the Desire of all nations;" what all which promise deliverance by God Himself, or by Him, His Mercy, Light, and Truth Which He hath sent, but Advent Psalms? So that as all the ancient fathers longed for His Coming, one might sooner say that the whole Psalter was one Advent prayer or praise, than be at a loss where to find in it expressions of our longing, if God hath given it us. And if, thus learning the deep meaning of its language, we turn back to our own Prayer-book, words which we have used day by day, and taken from it, "O God, make speed to save us; O LORD, make haste to help us," or "O LORD, show Thy Mercy upon us, and grant us Thy Salvation," utter the same meaning, and are a prayer for Him Whom Simeon longed to see, and seeing said, "Mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation." Then, as our LORD's Prayer expresses every want, and embraces every thought which can be directed towards God, and is a mirror reflecting in Divine light whatever holy desire is presented to it, so do the words, "Thy kingdom come," become at once a special Advent prayer; and, asking for "our daily bread," we ask for Him "the true Bread, Who came down from Heaven to give life to the world." In the Creed again, as it gives us the means of meditating in succession on all the mysteries of the faith, so now we must needs, with chief devotion, seek to fill our minds with the words, which do indeed fill and overflow all the capacities of all created beings, "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," meditating on Him Who filleth Heaven and earth, "abhorring not," but dwelling in "the Virgin's

womb ;" and then again, that He, the Same, should be our Judge, as both are so wonderfully united in that all-but-inspired hymn, the *Te Deum*. "Lighten our darkness" is an old Advent prayer for the True Light. Again, the threefold prayer for mercy, with which we prepare ourselves to say our *LORD'S PRAYER*, and the *Gloria Patri*, would now be used "to¹ the Father Who should send His Son into the world, to the Son Who is to come, to the HOLY GHOST, by Whose operation the mystery is to be wrought."

Only, for any as yet unaccustomed to this mode of entering into Holy Scripture, care is needed, lest the imagination, rather than the heart, be occupied in it. For, indeed, it is so beautiful, that it may readily occupy the mind, as might a beautiful picture, without filling it with any real devotion to Him Whom it exhibits. Yet, let any one in earnest adopt that stricter course which has here as before² been spoken of, and at this time anticipate the Judgment to come, and "judge himself that he be not judged;" and these words will come, not as something outward, but as they were in those who looked for Him then, and in all who shall see Him unto salvation, a real cry for deliverance; and they will rejoice, not that they see more (if so it be), but that they have such words wherewith to hope to be heard. "And the holy men," says S. Athanasius³, "who ministered them, shall pray with us. Yea, rather the Spirit Who spake in the holy men of old, looking

¹ Taken from a similar application in Guéranger, p. 49.

² Preface to Surin. p. liii. sqq. ³ Loc. cit. c. xxii.

at those words which Himself inspired into them, shall Himself together help us. For by how much the life of the Saints is better than others, by so much are the words uttered by them better than those composed by us, and one might truly say more powerful. For by those they pleased God, and amid the utterance of them, as the Apostle says, 'they subdued kingdoms,' &c. Wherefore now, also, let each reciting those same words be of good cheer, that by them God will hear those who are in need. For if he who saith them be afflicted, great shall be the consolation he shall see in them; or if tempted and persecuted, so singing them he shall be more approved and defended by the LORD, Who also shieldeth him who uttereth them, and by them shall drive back the devil. These if he uttereth, though he have sinned, he shall conceive shame, and shall cease; if he have not sinned, he shall see with joy that he is stretching forth to the things which are before, and so making melody, shall prevail when assaulted, yea, and never shall he be shaken from the truth."

Yet to this deeper meaning of Holy Scripture, there is perhaps no where in such short compass so much guidance as in that magnificent fabric of devotion, studded over, as it were, with the rich jewelry of the heavenly city, those same precious stones which shone once on the breastplate of the High Priest, reflecting light and truth. Nor if the mind be prepared for it by that stricter course, are there perhaps any where any more thrilling devotions than that adaptation of Holy Scripture, which was brought nearly into its present form, by one indeed versed in

Holy Scripture and the inward life, S. Gregory the Great, but which reaches up beyond him to the earliest ages of Christian Psalmody. The Antiphonary of S. Gregory is called "a Compilation" by his biographer, who still had access to his authentic copy⁴; and what in ordinary works were dispraise, gives to this its deepest interest, as being, like our Collects, the result of the devotion of successive centuries, perhaps from the first. For one of the earliest accounts of Christian worship speaks of their music; and it is wholly unlikely that the early Christians should have laid aside the hallowed chant of the temple; nor is there any reason to doubt the tradition that "S. Ignatius⁵, the third Bishop of Antioch, after the Apostle Peter, and who lived with the Apostles themselves, saw a vision of Angels singing hymns to the Holy Trinity in Antiphonal chants, and delivered to the Church in Antioch the mode which he had seen in vision." What the master-hand of S. Gregory left the Antiphonary, that nearly it has remained⁶. These Advent services⁷ then we may use

⁴ Joann. Diac. Vit. ii. 6.

⁵ "Any one who should compare this ['published from a very old MS.'] with modern Antiphonaries, will be most pleased to find, that scarcely any thing new has been introduced into our ecclesiastical books." Obs. &c. Præv. ad Collect. Respons. S. Greg. Opp. iii. p. 730.

⁶ Socr. vi. 8.

⁷ In the Advent service from the Breviary, as translated now many years ago (Tract 75), the hymns were wanting. They have been here added, having come from the same hand, to which the rest is owed, and to which our Church owes, it may be safely said, more than to any in the last three centuries; *Sua si bona norit!*

in sympathy and fellowship with our own early Church, as among the earliest sounds of restored devotion heard in the South⁸, and with the great Bishop to whom we owe so much. It cannot produce disloyalty to our Church, thus to go back to the ages to which she guides, or to use devotions which identify her with the Church then planted here of God.

Rather, we shall come to prize our own Liturgy more, if we carry into it the thoughts suggested by these key-notes, for itself will become to us fuller by the use. Thus the beautiful but simple invitatory, ever varying with the season, and now in Advent, "O come, let us worship: the LORD our God is coming;" or, "O come, let us worship: the LORD is now at hand,"—how, even without any distinct repetition, does it illumine the whole of the Venite, exultemus; and, in like manner, the Magnificat and the Benedictus! Day by day they may take a different tone or colouring, while the substance remains the same, the blessedness of the Redemption, or the stupendous greatness with which He has magnified our nature by His own ineffable lowliness.

With the same object of deepening our Advent

⁸ The Gregorian melodies and hymns (*ecclesiastica carmina*) are spoken of by Bede, as having been handed down by "the disciples of the blessed Pope Gregory." (Bede, v. 20.) The biographer of S. Wilfrid expressly mentions "The Responses and alternate Antiphones sung by two choirs, according to the use of the primitive Church," as transmitted from those taught by S. Gregory. Act. S. Ord. S. Bened. sec. iv. p. 1, quoted Præf. ad Antiph. S. Greg. Opp. iii. p. 649.

devotion, the Collects and special Thanksgivings of the Gregorian Sacramentary for the whole season have been here translated. They have been given exactly as they stood : most of them have, as will be seen, long since been lost to the Roman Church, as well as to our own. And yet, besides increasing our store of Advent devotion, they would lead us on, through greater strictness, to fuller joy ; for while the chief subjects of the prayers are protection, cleansing, acceptableness to God, fearlessness, holiness, enlightening, yet it must at least seem remarkable, how with the thought of the second Advent, and the awfulness of future judgment, ever before their eyes, there yet are expressions of actual joy, professions that the Church does joy, which are wholly unknown to our present Liturgy. One only prayer there is in the whole circuit of our year, that we " may rejoice in His holy comfort ; " no one profession that we do ; which yet is so common in the Festival Collects of the ancient Church, and here gleams through, even in the very sight of Judgment.

The little unpretending book now edited may, it is hoped, contribute, by God's blessing, to the hallowing of this season by fixing the mind^o, day by day,

^o There is some little difference between the order of Holy Scripture here commented upon, and that in our own Prayer-book. The Epistles for Advent in the Roman Breviary are the same as those in the Sarum, from which our own are taken: the Gospels in part differ ; that for the second Sunday, on the Day of Judgment, having gradually taken place of the first, " the triumphant entry into Jerusalem " (which in the

on some thought of duty, and presenting it each day with some of those unspeakable contrasts involved in the mystery of the Incarnation. And this is of the more moment to us now, because it is very difficult to preserve the right faith in the Incarnation without continued contemplation of It; and this doctrine will probably be the especial trial of our later ages, as that of our Blessed Lord's Divinity was of the earliest. And from misbelief in It, almost all other heresies spring. "It is certain," says Fulgentius¹, "that almost all the errors of heretical pravity have manifoldly crept in unawares on certain persons, in that that great Mystery of godliness, Which was made manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, was seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory, is by some either not believed as It is, or altogether disbelieved." Even

Roman Missal is transferred to Palm Sunday, when it took place). The Gospels for the third and fourth Sundays were then moved back to the second and third. The Gospel commented upon for Christmas Eve is ours for the Sunday after Christmas. Thus far they are the same portions as ours, only anticipated. The Gospel of Christmas Day, upon which the "Affective Paraphrases" are formed, is our second Morning Lesson. The differences are, that St. Luke iii. 1-6, was assigned to the fourth Sunday, here commented upon, Dec. 18-23, and the comments for Dec. 16, 17, are on the Gospel for Ember Wednesday (St. Luke i. 26. 38). There seemed, however, in this no sufficient ground for altering the structure of the book, since the subjects for meditation are mostly from the same Scriptures differently arranged, and the rest from kindred passages, especially since Advent thus began with a "Day of Fear."

¹ Ad Thraa. i. 4. quoted by Petav. de Inc. i. 1, 2.

further, except among very uninstructed persons, the failure to have a definite belief almost involves mis-belief. Unless the mind be inactive upon doctrine, and have no thought at all, it has no choice except between the settled belief of the Church and lawless thoughts of its own. There is no neutral undefined ground in matters of faith. It is, then, painful and startling to think of much prevailing vagueness of belief, when yet the mind cannot think at all of the Object of belief, cannot think of its LORD in Heaven, without falling into heresy, unless it be fixed in the truth. And as to the evils overtly around us, the right belief in It is (as the schoolmen and systematic writers have shown) the foundation of the doctrine of the Sacraments, as also of the true doctrine of the Essential Indwelling of the HOLY SPIRIT; a real appreciation of It would facilitate exceedingly the reception of this truth, and therewith also of the whole doctrine of sin and grace and penitence and justification. But then, when the superstructure is so wrong, must it not be feared that the foundation is often amiss also? Even where by God's mercy it is otherwise, still the failure to possess the soul with that great mystery, impairs and lowers almost infinitely the belief in the greatness of God's dispensations towards us.

As then the mysterious period of CHRIST our LORD's hidden life in the Virgin's Womb was now near its close, and the Christmas season is so short, it seems not unfitting to anticipate the contemplation. Rather, so may we the better come to see Him on the Day of His Nativity, if our thoughts shall be thus with Him day by day, during this time of expectation. And as

the two Mysteries to which God gives most power to draw and melt the soul, are the Incarnation and the Cross, and by them He pours into it a super-human, a Divine love, Advent may, we may the rather hope, through this lengthened contemplation, work by His mercy a reverent love for His Divine Infancy, as Lent should nail us to His Cross.

One point may be mentioned in this subject, although still not in defence, but in warning. It is probable that the actions and example of the Blessed Virgin, although exhibited very partially, will still have more place in this work, than they now have in the thoughts of most persons². For it is not perhaps too much to say that a large class of religionists have ceased to set themselves any Exemplar at all, their very ideal of Christian life being St. Paul's picture of the unregenerate. And even apart from this, it ought to be said plainly, that there is a diseased dread of any reverent mention of her who was taught by the HOLY GHOST to say, "All generations shall call me blessed," which threatens very serious evil, and even heresy. For the thought of her is inseparable from meditation on the true doctrine of the Incarnation, that our LORD was "God, of the Substance of His Father, begotten before the world, and Man of the substance of His Mother, born in the world." To deny the word *θεοτόκος* is, of course, heresy; to shrink from it then, is to be ashamed of the truth of

² Since our Church guides us to the Fathers, a large section has been added from S. Ambrose, showing how he in detail set forth St. Mary as a pattern. (The translation is that of a kind friend.)

GOD; to shrink from dwelling on the doctrine conveyed in it, that He "abhorred not the Virgin's womb," is secretly to have entertained some heretical counterfeit.

"Rejecting³, then, and casting far away all the opinions of the ungodly, to whom CHRIST is either foolishness or an offence, let the faith of the true of heart rejoice, and comprehend the One Very Son of God, not according to the Godhead only, whereby He was begotten of His Father, but also according to His Humanity, whereby He was born of a Virgin Mother. For He is in our humility, Who is in the Divine Majesty; Very Man, and Very GOD; Everlasting in what is His, subject to time in what is ours; One with the Father in that Substance, which never was inferior to the Father; One with His Mother in the Body which He created." "He⁴ Who came once to work salvation in the midst of the earth, visible in the flesh, cometh daily in spirit and invisible to save the souls of individuals. Hear Himself saying, 'If any man love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and will make our abode with him.' Blessed with whom Thou shalt make Thine abode, LORD JESUS!"

E. B. P.

CHRIST CHURCH,
Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity,
1844.

³ S. Leo, Sermon. v. in Nat. D. c. 3.

⁴ S. Bern. Sermon. 1 and 2, de Adv. Dom.

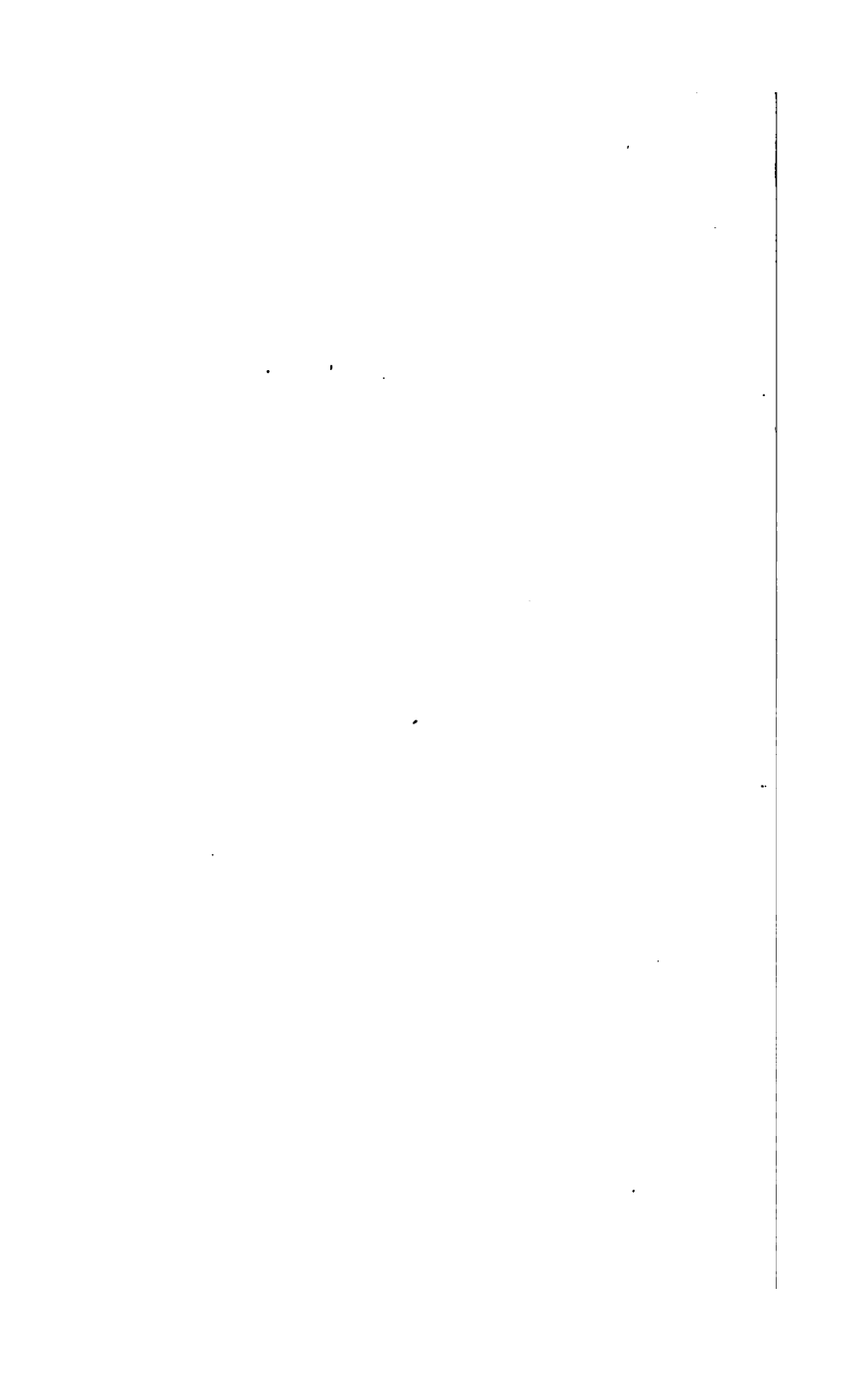
ADDITIONAL NOTES.

P. xxx.—This statement, as will be clear from the references, refers only to the southern part of the Greek Church ; the Editor having neglected to inform himself (as he might) as to the Russian Church, which has far greater tokens of life.

P. xxxiv. 3.—There are also sequences for the four Sundays in Advent, in Sarum Missals of different dates, as also in the York, 1533. They are also grammatically explained in the Expos. Sequentiarum, A. 1497 (and two others in the Gough collection), which implies their being in common use.

P. xxxv. 4. — In the Mozarabic Breviary, the lessons (which are repeated from the Sunday through the week), as well as the Canticles from Holy Scripture, mostly relate to God's mercies, to promises of the first Advent. The lessons are, Eccles. xxiv. 22—xxv. 10. Isa. xxii. 15—23. Ezek. xxxiv. 22—31. Isa. xlii. 10—16. Mic. iv. 1—10. Isa. vii. 11, sqq. The Canticles. Deut. xxxii. Job xxxvi. 26—xxxvii. 12. 2 Kings vii. 8—16. Zech. ix. 9—16. 2 Macc. i. 24—29. Isa. lxi. 10—lxii. 7. Isa. xxvi. 1—9. Hab. iii. With these are some very fervent Collects for "kindled love," that we may be "kindled with the longing for Thy sweetness." p. 2, 3.

P. liv.—Then might be added, in some degree, the collect, fifth Sunday after Trinity, "that *Thy Church* may joyfully serve Thee ;" but this is still different from the prayer for, or profession of, personal joy, especially at the festivals.



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PREFACE
OR
PREPARATION
FOR
Advent.

To prepare the faithful for the joyful advent of their Redeemer, is to partake of the spirit, and to follow the steps of the great Messenger; this was indeed the glorious office of John the Baptist, who appeared to come upon earth only for this one important function; even before his birth did he begin to fulfil it: he leaps with joy in the womb which bears him, and he strives to make his mother feel that which first he himself feels, namely, the presence of his God and of his SAVIOUR. And this it was which made his father, the blessed Zachariah, say, in a transport of mingled joy and prophecy: "And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways¹."

This divine forerunner entered the solitude of the wilderness from his earliest years, the better to pre-

¹ Luke i. 76.

pare himself for fulfilling his duty ; and he quitted it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, only in order to prepare men by repentance for the coming of that Messiah, of Whom he was " the Voice ;" but so eloquent, so echoing was that voice, that soon it was obliged to change itself into cries and shouts, the better to be heard by those vast multitudes who followed him in the desert to the borders of the Jordan : " I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord ²."

Let us here employ these same words : none can be more worthy of being placed at the beginning of this Guide for passing Advent holily : it was the Holy Ghost Who put them into the mouth of this holy Messenger ; let us entreat Him to imprint them on our hearts, that though through a changed channel, they may lose none of the strength, the energy, or the unction they possess, for worthily preparing us for the Birth of that God made Man, Who comes down from heaven through the love He has for us, that He may be our Redeemer, our example, our lawgiver, and at length our rewarder, at the price of His life and of His Blood.

Behold, then, these admirable words of St. John the Baptist, words which echoed with so much energy and such great fruit by the banks of the Jordan, and which the Church repeats, and causes to be echoed now in all sanctuaries by the lips of her ministers : " The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.

² John i. 23.

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the SALVATION OF GOD³."

Blessed indeed were we, if the Lord would deign to pour His blessings upon this Guide, and upon the faithful souls who shall follow it; and if, during this time of Advent, which is about to conduct us towards the longed-for Birth of the Saviour of Mankind, it might contribute towards "bringing low" some few of those proud "hills" which have "exalted" themselves against God, who deserve not that a God, humbled for their sakes, even to the lowly state of childhood, should honour them by His coming, which He accords ordinarily to those only who are "humble of heart!" Blessed, if it should contribute towards "filling" and upraising some few of those miry "valleys," wherein are found nought but low and earthly thoughts, and base feelings, and carnal desires which prevent them from raising themselves unto God, and which "sink" them in the deep "mire," "where," according to the expression of the Prophet, "no ground is!"⁴ Blessed, if it might "make straight" and "smooth" some few of those "crooked" and "rough ways," full of thorns and of rocks of offence, where there is no surety of walking without stumbling! and which impede them from approaching the manger, in order to learn and to profit by the Mystery of the Incarnation, and which prevent the new-born Saviour also from coming

³ Luke iii. 4-6.

⁴ Psa. lxi. 2.

unto them, that He may lighten their minds, sanctify their souls, and inflame their hearts with His Divine Love.

Follow this Guide which is given thee ; receive it with the same favour with which thou didst receive that which was presented thee for Lent and for the great Festivals of the year ; subject thyself to its practices ; they will be to thee as so many steps to draw thee near to the Manger, since they are taken from those very same virtues which the new-born Saviour practised in the stable, during His Infancy and the whole course of His Life. I pray God that thou mayest approach thither in the same spirit of faith as the Shepherds and the Magi, and that thou mayest bring back benedictions as they did, treasures of grace and of love, and that it may be said of thee, as the Royal Prophet said of a faithful people whose fervour he was praising, " Lord, thou preparest their heart, and Thine Ear hearkeneth thereto ⁵."

Enter without delay upon this preparation of heart, and allow not a single moment to be lost ; persuade thyself that thou hast not too much time ; for this Adorable Saviour draweth nigh, said St. Bernard, He cometh towards us, He strideth with giant steps ; behold Him, He waits for us, He calls us, He looks upon us, He speaks to us : Venit Christus, accelerat, appropinquat, adest, respicit, alloquitur. (St. Bern. in Cant.) Just and right is it that we should take some steps that we may go towards Him ; already is He come down from the Bosom of His Heavenly Father

⁵ Psa. x. 19.

into that of a Virgin, there to enclose Himself during nine months ; now is He there in solitude, in silence, and in captivity ; there doth He think upon us, He careth for us, He interesteth Himself in our happiness ; just and right it is that we should think of Him ; already is He clothed with our flesh, that He may establish between Himself and us an intimate union, and a sacred interchange of the most perfect love, in the most perfect "likeness : " He hath taken our's that we may take His ; it will not be on His part, if this covenant be not eternal.

He is about to be born in a poor stable, and upon a manger, when the term of nine months shall be expired ; happy moment, which we ought indeed ardently to desire, if we feel, as we ought to feel, the extreme need we have of a Saviour, and which He Himself expects with a holy and loving impatience, which can arise only from His own strong and vehement desire to deliver us from our sins, and to restore to us that life of grace which we had lost, and that life of glory to which we had no longer any right, and for which we scarcely any longer dared to hope.

The Saviour hasteneth to come to us ; let us hasten to go to Him : "let us run," and let us carry nothing with us which can retard our progress ; let us go to Him, not so much by the steps of the body as by those of the heart, which run far more swiftly ; that we may go to Him, let us follow all the steps which He Himself taketh, that He may come to us, and soon we shall have the blessedness of joining Him ; let us follow the star with the same zeal and the same faithfulness as did the Magi ; if it hideth

itself sometimes, let us approach Him by the obscure paths of faith ; let us say to ourselves, as they said to Herod : Vidimus ; " We have seen⁶." Let us not cease to walk forwards, and this hidden star will shine ere long with renewed lustre above our heads and in our hearts, to lead us to Bethlehem.

In order to help thee to prepare thyself for this birth of thy Saviour, occupy thyself with those feelings, with those desires, and with those warm ejaculatory prayers which the Patriarchs and Prophets used so often to raise towards Heaven from the very depths of their heart, before the mystery of the Incarnation, that they might obtain its accomplishment : employ the same expressions, for they are great examples ; the HOLY SPIRIT dictated them to their minds, and they have left them to us in writing : thou wilt do well carefully to choose some one daily during this Advent, to use it thyself, and to raise thy desires towards Heaven.

Unite thyself to these saints of the Old Testament ; ask like them, and with them, for the " Desired of all nations," the " Deliverer of His people," the " Light of the Gentiles," the " Righteous," the " Saviour of the whole world," the " Glory of His people Israel," the Destroyer of death, the peaceful Conqueror of the whole earth ; in a word, " the Way, the Truth, and the Life ;" the Way which conducteth safely ; the Truth which enlighteneth mankind, and which can never deceive ; and the Life which is not subject unto death.

⁶ Matt. ii. 2.

Oblige thyself during this Advent to live in continual recollection and in the Presence of God ; love seclusion and solitude, well persuaded that Jesus cometh not unto a dissipated soul : address thy desires and thy longings, thy most respectful and most loving homage to this Saviour Who is about to be born ; sometimes, as at the blessed moment of the divine and incomprehensible operation of the Holy Ghost, in which this God of Majesty was made Man for our sakes, from the most pure blood of a Virgin ; sometimes, as in the sacred Womb of that divine Mother wherein He resides ; sometimes during His journey to the house of Zachariah and Elizabeth, whither He allowed Himself to be borne by Mary to the scene of His first conquests, whilst He Himself upheld by His love and grace her who had the honour to bear Him : *Portans à quo portabatur*, says the devout S. Bernard (in Cant.) ; sometimes on the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem, where He suffered so many hardships at the hands of His own people ; sometimes in the stable where He is about to be born, as the poorest of men, upon a little hay, between two beasts, in a stable which He will bedew with His Tears, and fill with His infant Cries.

But to render the homage more worthy⁷ of the

⁷ This obviously is implied in any doctrine of the Communion of Saints, that our prayers individually are more accepted as united with those of the whole Church, visible and invisible ; that as sinners, our prayers are the more heard, in union with the holier and the perfect ; as, again, the sympathy with the perfected Saints and Angels in their love for our Lord, heightens the character of our love. [ED.]

Adorable Child to Whom thou wilt address it, unite it sometimes with that of Mary, His holy Mother, who was the first and most perfect Adorer of Him Who was both God and Man ; sometimes to that of St. Joseph her chaste spouse, the most worthy of all men to approach the Incarnate Word, to whose care He was about to be confided ; sometimes to that of the Angels who descend from Heaven to celebrate this Birth by their sacred Hymns ; sometimes present Him gifts like the Shepherds and like the Wise Men ; adore this Divine Infant with as much faith, respect, and love, as these first worshippers ; take part in the presents which they offered Him, and let thy heart be found among these gifts, for this is the most acceptable with which thou canst present Him.

Pass no single day of so holy and precious a time as that of Advent, without practising some interior and exterior mortification, in order to honour the sufferings of JESUS CHRIST in the stable ; often render to Him visits full of reverence and love ; multiply thy good works to the utmost of thy power, that thou mayest offer them to Him in the Manger ; daily entreat Him to accomplish in thee the adorable designs which have induced Him to clothe Himself with our flesh, to fill thee with all the graces which are attached to the ineffable mysteries of His Incarnation, of His abiding for nine months within the sacred womb of His divine Mother, and of His Birth in time, and to bestow upon thee all which He hath merited from His Heavenly Father, during the whole course of His mortal Life ; pray Him to come unto thee and to dwell in thee, according to the Divine promise which

He made thee by His well-beloved Disciple, when He said: "If a man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him⁸:" pray Him, finally, to prepare thee Himself for this precious, this holy, this honourable visit.

Thou wilt find in this daily Guide for Advent, a Practice, a Meditation, and Affections, taken either from the Gospel or the Epistle, and passages from the Holy Scriptures and the Fathers, relating to the Meditation, as I observed in the Guide for Lent. Thou wilt also daily find one point of the Incarnation; and the whole is concluded by a prayer and aspiration from one of the Prophets for obtaining the Messiah, in order that it may be used as a devout ejaculation during the day.

On the 16th of December⁹, which is the first of the nine days which precede the festival of Christmas, and for those following, are added short para-

⁸ John xiv. 23.

⁹ The commencement of these Antiphones is marked on the same day in our own Calendar, being derived from the Sarum Breviary, as also in Spain and the Church of Paris, being intermitted on St. Thomas's Day. (Hoffman, Lex. and Macer Hierolex. In a Paris Breviary of the 17th century, they begin on the 15th, another of a different kind being added.) In the Roman Breviary, they begin on the 17th. These celebrated Antiphones are seven in number, and date at least from the end of the sixth century, being part of the Antiphonarium of St. Gregory the Great. They all express, in the language of Scripture, the longing that He Who at this time visited us in our flesh, should again visit us spiritually in our hearts. —See the Advent Service, Tracts for the Times, No. 75. [Ed.]

phrases upon the O, or greater Antiphones at Vespers, with a daily homage to the coming JESUS ; finally, to occupy thee during the festival and the days following, upon this great mystery, the Gospel of the day is explained by several affective paraphrases, which are so many reflections, aspirations, and acts of love towards this adorable Saviour in the manger ; and the work finishes by some Practices, in order to end the year, and begin the new one worthily.

The First Sunday in Advent.

DAY OF FEAR.

PRACTICE.

As the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," according to the Royal Prophet (Ps. cxi. 10), thou wilt do well to begin this holy course of Advent by the practice of this virtue, that so it may safely conduct thy steps towards Him Who was Wisdom Incarnate. Do not lose sight of that fearful judgment, of which to-day's Gospel now gives thee so fearful a description; that Judgment which makes the most stout-hearted quail as well as the greatest Saints; in which God will judge not sins only, but righteousness. (Ps. lxxv.)

Nevertheless, let not thy fear be abject, but filial; and so behave and rule thyself in thy thoughts, in thy words, and in thine actions, as if immediately afterwards thou wast to be judged at the Tribunal of God; say often to Him during the day, with the Prophet: "O Lord, enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." (Ps. cxliii. 2.)

MEDITATION UPON THE FEAR OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL¹.

FIRST PART.

"Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." (Luke xxi. 27.)

¹ For the Second Sunday of Advent. See Pref. [Ed.]

How fearful a spectacle presents itself to-day before our eyes, and by how terrible a road does the Church begin to conduct us towards Bethlehem, even from the first day of Advent, that there we may adore and offer our most loving and respectful homage, not to a sovereign Judge of the living and the dead, but to a gentle and humble Infant ; not to a God Who thundering in the clouds condemns impenitent sinners to eternal anguish, but to a new-born Saviour, Who comes but to break our chains, to accord us mercy, to fill us with graces, to open to us the gates of Heaven, and to smooth, by His Example, by His Sufferings, and by the outpouring of His Blood, that road which will securely lead us thither ! Meditate seriously upon this ; for if one of these subjects gives birth to our confidence, the other is indeed worthy to excite our fears and our terror.

In the stable of Bethlehem, the Evangelist tells us we shall “ find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger :” here he tells us that we shall find the Son of man in the “ clouds, with power and great glory.” In the stable, He is a Babe without speech, explaining Himself only by His Tears and by His Infant Cries : in the clouds, He is an Almighty God Whose awful voice shall be heard by the whole earth. In the one, we shall find a new-born Saviour who stretches forth His arms towards us, a Deliverer Who sets us free, and Who comes to give all His Blood for us, in order to save us from sin, from death, and from hell ; in the other, an inexorable Judge, in Whom justice appears as the only attribute, to Whom mercy is no longer known, since He has tried it too long, and the sinner who has abused it is now to become the miserable victim of His eternal vengeance. Think often on this, that so thou mayest take heed to thyself against the misery with which thou art threatened. Fear that terrible Judgment

now, says St. Augustin (Serm.). For so shalt thou not fear it when it shall appear.

SECOND PART.

Never separate the two great subjects which are proposed to thee to-day, which represent to thee a Saviour being born in a stable, and thy Judge God coming in the clouds ; so shalt thou avoid those two rocks alike dangerous, of presumption on the one hand, and of discouragement on the other ; the one draws us, consoles us, and makes us hope everything, the other affrights us and makes us fear all things : the first inspires us with confidence, and the other causes us to take just precautions in order to avoid the woes with which we are threatened ; the first makes us hope for infinite endless joys, the second causes us to fear eternal pains, and urges us to avoid everything which may displease this rigorous Judge. Think of it therefore seriously.

Place thyself in spirit before that fearful Judgment-seat, and do this often ; it is a wholesome step which a true Christian should take daily, and upon every occasion in which he finds himself about to offend his God, nothing being more capable of restraining the hand when outstretched for some action forbidden by the law of God, or more able to fortify the mind and heart against those different temptations which present themselves. "Whatever thou takest in hand," says the Wise man, "remember the end, and thou shalt never do amiss." *Memorare novissima, et in æternum non peccabis.* (Eccl. vii. 36.)

Awaken as from a deep sleep at that fearful trumpet which calls the dead, and obliges them to come forth from their tombs that they may appear in judgment. Raise thine eyes that thou mayest see that just Judge in all the glory of His Majesty, the Cross at His side, and accompanied by all His angels ;

hear that glorious Voice which calls the righteous to never-fading crowns, and which says to them : " Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world ;" and that same Voice as of thunder, which says to the ungodly : " Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil."

In how woeful a situation will the sinner then be, says St. Anselm. (*De similit. mundi.*) On one hand will he see his sins in all their enormity ; on the other, a frightful multitude of devils ready to drag him into the bottomless pit ; above his head, God in anger ready to strike him with His thunderbolts, and to cast him into hell ; and beneath his feet that hell open, where he is about to be cast for an endless eternity.

Where wilt thou then fly, O miserable sinner? says St. Bernard : alas ! it will no longer be the time to fly : rather let us fly now, beforehand. And whither shall we fly ? To the Manger : let us seek shelter with our Infant Saviour, against God our Judge ; let us translate ourselves from the tribunal of His Justice to that of His Mercy ; finally, let us go thither to learn what we must do that we may turn away His wrath from us. Love Him, humble thyself, suffer with patience as He doth, and thou shalt not be judged, or thou shalt be judged with mercy.

AFFECTIONS.

O Lord, quicken me according to Thy judgments, said the penitent king, (*Ps. cxix. 156*), pierce my heart, pierce my soul and all its powers with the wholesome sword of Thy fear ; for Thy Judgments make me tremble, because I am a sinner. May this sinful flesh which hath so greatly offended Thee by its luxury, by its cowardice and by its rebellions against the Spirit, be now pierced with just sorrow, and begin

a life of penitence in order to expiate² all the sins it is guilty of, that thus it may avoid the eternal woes with which it is threatened. May my memory, which hath so often been filled with many perilous remembrances displeasing to Thee, never more forget that fearful Judgment: may it occupy itself only with my sins in order to weep for them, and with Thy mercies that it may acknowledge them. May my mind, which hath so greatly offended Thee by thoughts contrary to thy holy laws, think no longer, but of thinking of Thee to expiate her wanderings, and that my heart may be penetrated with deep sorrow for them.

I am guilty, O my sovereign Judge! I acknowledge it, and a thousand times have I deserved death; I can neither decline to appear before Thy Judgment-seat, nor except against Thee as my Judge, nor declare the sentence which Thou shalt pronounce against me false, nor appeal to another tribunal: but that which I should not be able then to do, I can do now; I appeal from Thee to Thyself, from the tribunal of Thy last Judgment to that of Thy Manger. Ah! again I breathe. Sweeter far is it to me to find a gracious God, a Mediator, an Infant, and a Saviour, in a stable, than to see Thee in Thy terrors coming upon the clouds, in the day of Thy vengeance. Ah! Lord, give me grace to love Thee so tenderly as my Saviour, that I may have no room to fear Thee then as my Judge.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

ON THE FEAR OF JUDGMENT.

God is a righteous Judge, strong and patient. (Ps. vii. 12.)

God commandeth us to preach unto the people,

² See Preface to Guide for Lent, p. xxvii.

and to testify that it is He Which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. (Acts x. 42.)

What can be sweeter for us than to see that Saviour come upon earth Whom we desire? Notwithstanding, let us fear, for He Who is now our Advocate, will one day be our Judge. (S. Aug. lib. 3 de temp.)

JESUS CHRIST was humble and patient in His first Advent; but none can think how great, how powerful, how terrible He will be in His Second. (Hug. Card. in Malach.)

FIRST POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

A MEDIATING JUDGE.

God is the sovereign Judge of angels and of men, this is an attribute inseparably attached to the supreme greatness of His Being, and to His quality of Creator. He judged the rebellious Angels. He hurled them into the hell which He created in His wrath for those revolted powers; and those hitherto perfect spirits have had neither Mediator nor Redeemer. We then are much more favoured by God than the Angelic nature was, since we have both, in God made man for our sakes. This is a favour which daily we should acknowledge, nay every moment of our life.

As JESUS CHRIST is God, He loseth not His quality of sovereign Judge of quick and dead, because He is man; He has it still more as Redeemer, and "because He is the Son of man," says the well-beloved disciple (John v. 27). But He appeareth to renounce this quality in the manger, and during His whole mortal life, in order to become our Mediator with God His Father; or rather, He hath by a miracle of His Love united these two qualities of

Judge and Mediator, hitherto altogether incompatible.

It is thus that the great Apostle speaks of it to his disciple Timothy (1 Tim. ii. 4) : "God will have all men to be saved, for there is One God, and One Mediator between God and men, the Man CHRIST Jesus ; Who gave Himself a ransom for all." But it is important to mark, that in order to confirm our confidence in His Mercy, in the manger He exercises this one function of Mediator only, and He will take that of Judge but at the end of the world.

Let us go in spirit to the stable of Bethlehem, there shall we find God our Mediator, Who, though a Child, can succour us, because He is Almighty, and will succour us, because He loveth us. He is God with His Father before Whom He pleads for our reconciliation ; He is Man with man for whom He prays ; He belongs then to both, for He is both ; and this it is which was needed in order to be a perfect Mediator : and consequently our confidence in His Power and in His Love ought to be perfect and without bounds, provided we accompany it by our good works.

His Childhood, His Weakness, His Infant Cries, His Tears, His Poverty, His Sorrows, and more than all, that Heart full of love plead for us, and make themselves effectually heard by God His Father ; let us ask with Him, let us ask by Him, let us ask Him Himself to pray for us as our Mediator, and to spare us as our Judge.

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Rorate, cœli, desuper, et nubes pluant Justum.

Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down Righteousness. (Isa. xlv. 8.)

The First Monday in Advent.

DAY OF CONFIDENCE.

PRACTICE.

TAKE care to make an act of confidence when thou awakest, and address it to the new-born Jesus lying in the manger. Strive vehemently to feel it in thy heart, or rather to make it come out from it: repeat it often during the day, without losing sight either of the distrust thou shouldest have of thine own weakness, or of the filial fear of an infinitely just God. Neglect not to sustain thy confidence by good works, without which confidence is but presumption; and often say these loving and consoling words to Jesus Christ with the apostle St. Paul, "I trust in Thee my LORD JESUS." (Rom. xiv. 14; Phil. ii. 19.) Confido in Domino Jesu.

MEDITATION UPON TRUST IN GOD.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL [FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT].

FIRST PART.

"When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke xxi. 28.)

What excellent wisdom, and what exceeding goodness in the Saviour of men! What loving attention in sparing their weakness, and in regulating the different emotions of their hearts! It was in His Wisdom and His Justice that He willed to intimidate them by the fear of His last Judgment: but it was of His loving kindness to cheer them again by confidence in His Mercy, and in that Redemption which He had come upon earth to work out for them by

His Incarnation, and He was so gracious as to do both in the same discourse.

It was necessary to terrify His still carnally-minded Apostles, by the terrible picture of the last Judgment, in order to guard them against presumption, and to urge them to seek security against that fearful Day, by repentance and good works : but lest they should fall into discouragement, it was necessary, without effacing the impression which so terrible a discourse might have made on their minds, to raise their fallen courage, and to make them comprehend that this fearful description of the last Judgment was for them a precaution only, but for the ungodly a reality, and for the righteous the drawing nigh of their redemption ; and that, finally, they were able to avoid the one and to procure the other for themselves.

What choice art thou about to make between these two very different states ? If thou well understandest thy real interest, it is this. Tremblingly behold that just Judge, and hearken with fear whilst He pronounces that tremendous decree against impenitent sinners ; but ever be faithful to His grace, and trust that thou wilt there see thine own redemption drawing nigh, and so regulate thy feelings, that thy confidence may overcome thy fear.

I know that fear is commanded, and that it oftentimes restrains a trembling hand, which without it would do iniquity. Fear then, indeed, but fear God as we fear a father whom we dread to displease, because we love him. I know also that confidence in Him is commanded, because it is formed by love ; often make acts of it. Besides, it is much more consoling and much more sweet to practise than fear : for what can be more sweet than to cast oneself into the arms of God our Saviour, Whom we love, Who loveth us, and to trust in His goodness ? Trust then, and thou wilt not be confounded. "Cast not away thy con-

fidence," says St. Paul (Heb. x. 35), "which hath great recompense of reward."

SECOND PART.

"When ye see these things come to pass, said the Saviour, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." (Luke xxi. 31.)

Look upon these admirable words as a confirmation of the preceding ones, they appear even to explain and to extend them; both in order to excite our confidence in God and in His Goodness, and even to delight us with the thought of all we can desire of most agreeable and most delightful; they tell us that this redemption which He promises us, and which He causes us to hope for, is none other thing than the Kingdom of God, which is eternal, in which we shall most certainly participate if we be faithful to Him: what a motive is this for confidence!

But, nevertheless, in order not to mistake in a matter of such importance, wherein nothing less is pending than an eternity of joy or woe, thou oughtest to attend to two beginnings, and to two foundations, "sure and stedfast," which produce it, upon which it is supported, with which it is impossible to fall again into illusion or to exceed, and without which it falls and perishes.

The first principle of this confidence is God alone, that is to say, His Power, His Goodness, His Faithfulness, His Grace, His Redemption, His Merits, His Sufferings, His Blood, and His Death. The Goodness of God is His very nature, and hath more pleasure in shewing mercy to the sinner who implores it with a humble and a contrite heart, than the sinner hath in receiving it. His Power, which can do all things, which nought can resist, knoweth how to gather glory even from sin itself, according to the

Apostle St. Paul, and never triumphs with more splendour than in pardoning sinners, and in making vessels of grace and election, from vessels fitted only for eternal destruction. His Divine promises are so sure, that He said in this Gospel, the "Heavens and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." His Blood is the price whereby He hath purchased Heaven for us, and His graces He refuseth to none.

The other principle of our confidence is our good works; for, truly, to believe that we shall avoid that terrible Judgment of God, without ceasing to offend Him, without penitence, without practising virtue, is not confidence, but presumption; it is not to such presumptuous ones that JESUS CHRIST has said: "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh;" but rather will He say to them; Ye have made Me serve your sins through the vain shadow of confidence: "depart ye cursed into everlasting fires."

AFFECTIONS.

O Almighty and all merciful God! God of justice, God of goodness, I can see Thee, but with trembling, in all the glory of Thy terrible Majesty, ready to judge the quick and dead; and that which excites my fear is, that I am a sinner, and I know that that fearful day will be the day of Thy Justice and of Thy Vengeance, which no mortal shall ever be able to avoid if he have incurred Thy Wrath by his sins.

But I know too that Thou art the God of Mercy, and that though my Judge, Thou ceasest not to be my Saviour; and this it is which reassures me, this it is which prevents me from casting away my confidence. Thou hast commanded me to "hold it fast," Thou hast loved me, I am the work of Thy Hands, and the price of Thy Blood.

Were Thy wrath ready to break over my head, still I should know how to shelter myself securely from it by Thy help; I would appeal from Thee to Thyself, and from the tribunal of Thy Justice to that of Thy Mercy: I should still be spared, according to the word which Thou hast given me by Thy Prophet, (Ps. ii. 11, 12,) provided I still "put my trust in Thee," for I cannot put my trust truly in Thee, if I love Thee not, nor love Thee without feeling sorrowful for having offended Thee, nor feel this sorrow without being disposed to revenge Thee upon myself by penitence.

I put my trust in Thee, O my GOD and my Saviour! and, assured of Thy Divine Protection, I will not fear mine enemies, however many in number or however powerful they may be, even when they "bend their bow and make ready their arrows within the quiver, that they may privily shoot at me," according to the expression of the same Prophet. Yes, O my JESUS! since Thy love for me is great as Thy power, I will trust in Thee, and I shall not be confounded. (Ps. xi. 1, 2.)

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON TRUST IN GOD.

They that put their trust in the Lord shall understand the truth: and such as be faithful in love shall abide with Him. (Wisdom iii. 9.)

I trust in the Lord Jesus. (Phil. ii. 19.)

On that alone which is eternal can we rightly trust. It cannot be taken from him who loves. (S. Aug. 83. Quæst. 35.)

Alas! Lord, my sins can only inspire me with fear, but Thy Goodness inspires me with confidence. (Medit. c. 2. ap. S. Aug.)

SECOND POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

AN AVENGING AND A LOVING GOD.

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord," by His Prophets and by the Apostle St. Paul; it belongeth unto Him, says St. Augustine, because being Justice itself as well as Sovereign Wisdom, being exempt from all passion, and consequently incapable of any unjust predilection, and of any antipathy, He alone knows how to proportion the punishment to the crime. Under the old law, which was a law of strictness, and one in which God seldom made Himself heard by His people but amid thunderings and lightnings, He oftentimes threatened with His vengeance; nay, He even caused Himself to be called the God of Vengeance, *Deus ultionum*: and from time to time He did exercise terrible judgments, and thus brought back to their duty the carnal and stiff-necked people whom He was leading.

But it appears that He willeth to lay aside that fearful title of an Avenging God, under the new law which He is about to establish by His Incarnation; a law of love and of grace, in order to join our hearts, and because the time of the New Covenant which He hath come to make with us, is that concerning which He had predicted by one of His Prophets (Jer. xxxi. 33), that He would "give another law to men," that He would put it in their "inward parts," and that He would Himself "write it," and grave it "in their hearts."

He becometh then a loving God towards men, and He maketh Himself "like unto" them, that so they may become like unto Him; He maketh Himself man, that so men may become gods; through love doth He take that which is in man, that so man may take that which is in Him; none can love more than this, and the most impassioned

of all lovers, says a holy doctor, has never been able to invent anything more vehement. Verily, this Almighty God, Who made man without man's help, made Himself man for the love of man. Let us further add with St. Fulgentius, one thing which is still more loving and still more nearly affecting us: Sinful man, says this father, despises God, and withdraws himself from Him: and this Almighty God, thus despised, becomes man for his sake. Ah! now do I perceive, says St. Bernard (in Cant.), that man having nothing in himself deserving of love, God must needs draw from Himself the very motives of His love towards him, and this it is which makes His Love more vehement. He is then, concludes this father, not loving only, but even Love itself; can we fail to love Him Who is Love?

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Aperiat terra, et germinet Salvatorem.

Let the earth open, and let them bring forth Salvation. (Isa. xlv. 8.)

The First Tuesday in Advent.

DAY OF WATCHFULNESS.

PRACTICE.

ARISE to-day from thy sleep as soon as thou canst, take heed not to give way in the least to sloth or to negligence, and above all, as to-day is dedicated to watchfulness, be not remiss in any of thy duties, and pardon not the loss of a single moment of time, lest thou shouldst enter into temptation. Every thing urges thee to this; the inestimable value of time, which is of not less value, in one sense, than the Blood of JESUS CHRIST Himself, seeing it is the price by which He hath bought thee; the near ap-

proach of thy redemption, and consequently of death and of judgment, which are indeed nearer than thou thinkest. Let thy watchfulness be extended over all thy thoughts, thy feelings, thy desires, thy words, and all thine actions.

MEDITATION UPON CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

“Know ye, said JESUS CHRIST to His Apostles, that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” (Luke xxi. 31.)

To our Adorable Saviour it sufficed not that He had terrified His Apostles by the fear of the last Judgment, in order to forewarn them against presumption; it sufficed not that He had calmed their fears by confidence and by the hope of a redemption drawing near, in order to fortify them against discouragement and against despair of the Divine Mercy; He willeth yet, in His graciousness, to give them the means of avoiding the severity of this Judgment, and all its fearful consequences, and of assuring themselves of that blessed redemption, by the watchfulness with which He inspireth them, and for which He furnisheth the motives. To this end, with a Divine impressiveness, He employs the comparison of a fig-tree, and the other trees, which announce “that summer is nigh at hand,” when they “begin to shoot forth” their buds. “So likewise ye,” said the Saviour, when ye see these prophecies begin to come to pass in the world, “know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.” We must watch therefore and be attentive, lest they should come to pass without our perceiving it.

Man is naturally inclined to grow remiss in his

most essential duties ; vigilance, fatigue, and application, dishearten him. It is true that threats awaken him, and that the fear of a great evil which may come upon him, and the hope of a great good which is promised him, and of which he receives the assurance, may for a while render him attentive and watchful ; but he soon falls again by his own heaviness into indifference, slothfulness, and carelessness ; it appears as if these great truths wear themselves out, as if they lose all their power over him, and affect him no longer.

Most shameful is it in a Christian man, who hath an eternal kingdom to hope for and a hell to fear, to be vigilant to excess concerning some vile temporal interest, whilst he slumbers over the interest of his soul ; above all, when his vigilance can insure him that for which he hopes, and deliver him from that he fears. " Watch ye, therefore," says JESUS CHRIST, " for ye know neither the day nor the hour " of that greatest of all events, which affects thee most nearly, even that which will decide, without appeal, between thine eternal blessedness or misery.

SECOND PART.

If it is unpardonable cowardice in a warrior of this world, who aspires to worldly honour, to neglect to watch, when the conquest of a kingdom is at stake ; and if he deserves to be degraded from all his honours when, being provided with everything necessary for success, he fails, through his own carelessness and sloth, is it not far more shameful in a Christian, who is born for conflicts, to slumber when an eternal kingdom is laid open before him, and he is furnished with all the means he can require for its conquest ? Alas ! courage and faith must indeed be lacking in him ; the more when he is persuaded, that if through his cowardice and his want of vigilance he fail to conquer

this kingdom, he will, through his own fault, be miserable eternally.

Does the miser sleep when a treasure depends upon his vigilance? Does application, labour, watching, or the privation of peace and of sleep, affright him when it is a question of enrichment? Do the ambitious sleep when they have some place of honour in view which they are sure of obtaining, if they bestow their application, their solicitations, and their nights of watching upon it? "Would not the good man of the house have watched," says the Saviour (Matt. xxiv. 43), if he "had known in what watch the thief would come" to carry away his goods? And if the love of temporal riches, of which the least accident may nevertheless deprive him, cause him to overcome sleep, with how much greater reason should we watch, that we may preserve the spiritual goods of our soul, which consist in the grace of JESUS CHRIST, and in order to acquire the everlasting treasure? "Watch, then," says St. Augustine (*de Verb. Dei*), "watch by the heart, watch by faith, watch by love, watch by good works." "Be vigilant," says St. Peter (1 Pet. v. 8), "because the adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour;" and he will surprise thee if thou watchest not. Thou hast every thing to fear, thou hast everything to hope; such are the two great motives for Christian watchfulness; thou hast an eternal kingdom to hope for, and that thou mayest attain thither; thou hast sins to expiate, and virtues to acquire: "watch therefore."

AFFECTIONS.

Oh that I might say, Lord, with as much truth as did the kingly Prophet (Ps. lxiii.): My God, my God, early, yea before the sun ariseth, will I arise to seek Thee, I long after Thee, my soul thirsteth for Thee with burning desire; my flesh also, which I

make to watch, longeth for Thee with the same ardent lovè (Ps. cii. 2); I "forget" sometimes even "to eat my bread," through watching over my duties, that I may incessantly render Thee the homage and the adorations which I owe Thee, because Thou art my God, my Creator, and my whole strength: in the night watches I have meditated upon Thy wondrous works, and sung praises unto Thee, and I have been alone like a sparrow that sitteth upon the house-top.

But to what eminent perfection did this kingly penitent attain by his watchfulness! and how far am I from it through having neglected to watch over myself! Ah! if I had been faithful to this Christian watchfulness, and if I had not so often and so long slumbered over my most essential duties, whilst the "enemies of my peace" were but too watchful for my loss; how many virtues might I not have acquired! How many passions and evil habits might I not have eradicated! Alas! I know but too well, that for lack of watching over my soul, I have left it like an untilled field, in which the evil weeds of bad habits have taken but too deep root: my heart has become the prey of a multitude of imperfect attachments, and has lost many graces.

If the Shepherds had been sleeping, the Angels would not have announced to them Thy Birth, O my Saviour! I desire to watch like them, that I may profit by it; but, ah, Lord! arouse my sleeping soul, and stablish it, said the kingly Prophet, in Christian watchfulness, by the authority of Thy Divine Word: "Dormitavit anima mea pro tædio, confirma me in verbis tuis." (Ps. cxviii. [cxix.] 28.)

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

ON CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

I sleep, but my heart waketh. (Sol. Song, v. 2.)

Whoso seeketh Her (Wisdom) early shall have no great travail ; for he shall find Her sitting at his doors. (Wisdom vi. 14.)

The more the enemy watcheth to destroy, the more should the Christian watch to conquer. (Perhaps Cæsarius App. S. Aug. Serm. 56.)

He watcheth who ever hath the eyes of his soul open to the true light, and upon his own duties. (V. Bede, in Proverb.)

THIRD POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

THE WORD SILENT.

"In the beginning was the WORD," says the well-beloved Disciple (John i.), "And the WORD was God," as is the Heavenly Father Who hath begotten Him from all eternity. By this WORD were all things made, and this WORD was life and the beginning of life ; He was the light of men : this light hath shined in our darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not : this WORD hath had the power to make many children of God ; there are men in the world who have received and believed on Him : finally, this WORD was made flesh for the love of us. Such is the admirable and sublime Theology of the WORD, dictated by the HOLY SPIRIT, and written by the well-beloved Disciple, who has been, if one might so speak, His secretary and interpreter.

Let us add, with the holy fathers, that this generation of the Divine WORD is ineffable and incomprehensible ; because the Father Who begets is God, the Son Begotten is God, and the Son is equally Ancient, equally Almighty, equally Invisible, equally Immortal, equally Wise, equally Ineffable with the

Father; He is the Thought by which this Adorable Beginning knoweth Himself; He is, I say, His Thought, His WORD, His Speech, His SON, His very Substance, God of God, Light of Light, Wisdom of Wisdom, Essence of Essence, and His express Image. How inconceivable a greatness! Believe it, adore it, love it; faith, and adoration, and love, have a right to approach this Sun of Righteousness.

But this WORD Which is GOD, and Which is so great, so pure, so holy, hath made Himself man; He hath made Himself a Child for our sakes: begotten of the FATHER from all eternity, He willeth to be begotten in the womb of a Virgin! through the ineffable operation of the HOLY GHOST, this WORD, Who is the living Word, and the very Eloquence of the Divinity, willeth to become a dumb WORD and without speech: how great a prodigy of united humility and love!

Let us then pay our homage to this WORD, Who is above all first in the sacred womb of His divine Mother; He is enclosed like a prisoner of love, like a word unspoken; and this voluntary silence which He there preserves is as worthy of our attention and of our respect, as the oracles which shall one day be pronounced by His Adorable Mouth when He shall converse among men: in the second place, go also to the Manger, there to adore this WORD as a Child; He hath a Mouth, but He speaketh not; still He will hearken to thee; and although dumb, He will speak as He wills to thy heart; His silence and His infant cries have each their language, their eloquence, their energy, and their anointing.

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Qui sedes super Cherubim, excita potentiam tuam et veni, ut salvos facias nos.

Thou that sittest upon the Cherubim, stir up Thy strength and come and help us. (Ps. lxxx. 1, 2.)

The First Wednesday in Advent.

DAY OF FAITHFULNESS.

PRACTICE.

As perfect faithfulness in everything, such as God practiseth towards thee, and consequently has a right to exact of thee, who owest all to Him, demands much return and much attention from thee, begin at thine awaking by promising to pay it to Him, and by asking it of Him ; be careful not to commit the least unfaithfulness, during the course of the whole day, either in little things or in great ; and if thou failest in any particular, expiate it immediately ; be faithful then in fulfilling all thy duties well ; remember the Presence of God ; be faithful to inspirations, to prayer, to mortification, and to the love of thy neighbour : the God Whom thou servest, Who is a faithful God, will make it easy to thee, and will reward thee.

MEDITATION UPON FAITHFULNESS.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Luke xxi. 33.)

Yes, heaven and earth, however stable they may appear to thee, will pass away rather than the words which come from the mouth of CHRIST, whether in the terrible threats which He utters in the Gospel, concerning the Last Judgment and its fearful results, or the eternal rewards which He promises to those who shall be faithful to Him even unto death ; both are infallible, and will be justified by the event before the face of Heaven and of earth, because our God is a faithful

God, Who consequently hath a right to exact fidelity from those men, for whose sakes He has carried His Faithfulness even unto death.

When a man has preserved an exact fidelity towards his friend, has supported his interests at the expence of his own, has ever rendered him important services, has ever taken his part, kept his secret, executed his promises, without ever relaxing in his faithfulness, despite every painful occurrence and every cross event which may have occurred, has he not a right to expect that this friend on whom he has conferred so many obligations should be faithful to him?

JESUS CHRIST is this friend, faithful even unto death, He inviteth us to fidelity, He is faithful, says the kingly Prophet, in His words (Ps. lxxxix. cxi. cxvii.) ; He is faithful in His Promises ; He is faithful in all His ways ; He is faithful in His Covenant ; and His faithfulness towards me hath not cost Him less than His very Heart's Blood, and it is by this noble act that He hath crowned it ; so great an honour even does He esteem this His Faithfulness, that in the Apocalypse He takes the glorious name of Faithful (Rev. xix. 11), and He takes it for two reasons ; the one, that He may inspire the good with confidence, and the wicked with dismay ; the other, in order to engage them to esteem this faithfulness both as a duty and an honour through His Example.

I am a sinner, I have committed many acts of unfaithfulness ; I ought to fear that faithful God Who threatens to punish me, and Who threateneth not in vain : on the contrary, if I satisfy His Justice, and if I be faithful to Him henceforth, I ought to hope all things from His fidelity and goodness, since He hath promised me "exceeding great rewards," and I am sure that Heaven and earth will sooner pass away than He be wanting to His Word.

SECOND PART.

Behold then these all-glorious promises: think then that they are made to thee, to thee thyself, and that it is to thee they speak, that they may engage thee to be faithful to Him, even unto death. The Lord says by His Prophet (Ps. ci. 6), that His "Eyes look upon such as are faithful," and that He will make them partakers of His kingdom, by causing them to "dwell with" Him. After His Incarnation He confirmed this promise for our greater consolation; in His graciousness He even speaks to him, saying lovingly; "Good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." (Matt. xxv. 21.)

But imagine not that the faithfulness which we owe to God, is for a day only or for a festival, or even for some years; as there is no day or moment of our whole life in which God is not faithful to us (although He oweth us nothing), in which He has not His Eye over us, and in which He is not ready to do us good, when we put no obstacle to His mercy through our unfaithfulnesses: so the fidelity which He exacts from us is that of our whole life, and He warns us of this by these words:—"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. ii. 10.)

Here make some reflections upon the infinite graces which thou hast received from God, and upon thine innumerable unfaithfulnesses to them in failing to acknowledge them, to reply to them, and to make them profitable to thee, in the way which God demanded of thee, and as thou mightest have done; and allow that this examination can but cover thee with shame and with confusion, penetrate thee with sorrow, and make thee justly fear an awful future, and a far more strict examination than thine own

from God, if thou employest not every means without delay which may expiate and repair thy faults. Above all, examine upon what subjects thou hast committed the most unfaithfulnesses: accuse thyself first at the tribunal of thine own conscience, that so thou mayest anticipate and prevent that of God; regret, groan, repair, and finally form a firm and hearty resolution, to be henceforth faithful to Him even unto death.

AFFECTIONS.

O faithful God! can I appear here before Thine Eyes without confusion of face, after the many acts of unfaithfulness of which I feel myself guilty? (Rev. xix. 2. 7.) Thou hast ever been faithful to me; and in order to engage me to that fidelity which I owe to Thee, Thou hast promised me a crown of life. (Rev. ii. 10.) Yes, Lord, although Thou owest me nothing, Thou hast been ever faithful to me in Thy words and in Thy promises, which Thou hast ever kept towards me; faithful in providing for all the wants of my body and of my soul; faithful in Thy loving-kindness, which I have never lost but through mine own fault; faithful in Thy graces, which never have been wanting to me. Not content with giving to Thyself the glorious name of "Faithful," in order to inspire me with confidence in Thy goodness; Thou givest it to me also, in order to distinguish me from the unfaithful, who never will have a part in Thy celestial heritage.

But, alas! how unworthily have I borne this sacred name of "faithful," since I have not yet fulfilled its signification, and, on the contrary, have denied it and dishonoured it by unfaithfulnesses innumerable? Unfaithful to Thy divine word, which I have heard a thousand times without profiting by it; unfaithful to Thine inspirations and to Thy graces,

which I have neglected ; unfaithful to my own resolutions and to those most sacred promises which I have so often made Thee before the Altar, and which I have violated almost as soon as made ; unfaithful to the duties of my religion and of my station, which I have not fulfilled as I ought to have done, as I could have done, as Thou didst inspire me to do, and as I have promised Thee. Pardon me, O faithful God ! give me now boldness and strength to promise Thee here to be faithful to Thee unto death, and to be wanting to Thee no more.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON FAITHFULNESS.

He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. (Luke xvi. 10.)

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (Rev. ii. 10.)

If thou hear the word of God with all the fervour, and keep it with all the faithfulness thou shouldest, that word shall become to thee all thou canst desire. (Orig. Hom. 16. in Exod.)

Graces cease to flow from Heaven into our souls, if by our unfaithfulness we cease to make them rise again into their source. (St. Bern. Sermon. 1. Quadr.)

FOURTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

THE REDEEMER REDEEMED.

The title of Redeemer is one of the most glorious attributes of God, and the Name which He takes, and which the Prophets often give Him in the Old Testament, in order to inspire men with respect, with thankfulness, with confidence, and with love. "Thou, O Lord, art my Helper and my Redeemer," said the

Prophet. (Ps. xix. 14.) "Our Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts is His Name, the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. xlvii. 4), said the Prophet Isaiah, and in the same spirit it was that the priest Zachariah, perceiving that **JESUS CHRIST** was about to be born of Mary, acknowledged Him before He appeared upon earth, as the Redeemer of Israel, exclaiming, in his sacred canticle, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He hath visited and redeemed His people." (Luke i. 68.)

Truly it was needful, says St. Augustine¹, that the **WORD** of **GOD**, by Whom the whole world was made, should also come to redeem the world; but in order that His Love should shine forth with new glory, He was not content with having fulfilled that glorious office, but He willed also to put Himself in such a position as to be Himself redeemed, in order the more efficaciously to perform the function of a Redeemer. He made Himself man to redeem all men; He took the form of a servant, to redeem us from slavery; He took the appearance of a sinner, and really laid upon Himself our sins, that He might redeem us from our sins, and from the punishments which were due to them; finally, He became subject unto death, that He might redeem us from death. (Idem, in Ps. 50.) What greater mercy can be conceived, says Cassidore! What a wondrous redemption, what a miracle of love, to see a Creator created, a King serving, a Redeemer sold, Greatness Itself brought low, and the Author of life submitting to death! And at what a price! That of His Blood! "Ye know," said the chief of the Apostles (1 Pet. i. 18, 19), "that ye were not redeemed with corrupti-

¹ Serm. 145 de temp. [Serm. 237, fin.] "He redeemed the whole Who created the whole; the Word took the whole (of our nature), freed the whole. The mind and understanding were There; There the Soul vivifying the Flesh; There the Flesh verily and entirely; Sin alone was not There."

ble things as silver and gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ."

Scarcely will this Divine Redeemer appear in the world, than He will Himself be redeemed, in the way of His own appointment, and by His own creatures. Herod will seek for Him to put Him to death, and He will owe His life to Joseph, who will save his Saviour by his flight into Egypt; He will be presented in the Temple, and Mary His holy Mother will redeem His liberty by two turtle doves.

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Adjutor et protector meus es tu; DEUS meus, ne tardaveris.

Thou art my helper and my deliverer: make no long tarrying, O my God. (Ps. xl. 17.)

The First Thursday in Advent.

DAY OF FERVOUR.

PRACTICE.

IN giving thy heart to God at thy first awaking, which is nothing but an act of love, which every Christian is obliged to do daily, above all at the beginning of the day, do it as perfectly, as purely, and as fervently as possible. In order to do it well, humbly entreat the aid of God's grace, without which thou canst do nothing; repeat this act as often as thou canst during the day; and let all thy thoughts, all thy feelings, all thy words, and all thine actions savour of this fervour.

MEDITATION UPON FERVOUR.

TAKEN FROM THE EPISTLE FOR SUNDAY.

FIRST PART.

"Now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." (Rom. xiii. 11.)

Observe that this great Apostle, who was wholly inflamed with the fire of divine love, and who desired that all true believers should love God with as much fervency as himself, that so they might not be taken by surprise at the approach of the Great Day, very wisely begins to reform their hearts, and warns them to put away all the obstacles which oppose themselves to this fervour, namely, spiritual heaviness, lukewarmness, and faintness of heart.

And, indeed, however convinced we may be of the necessity of loving God with all our heart, with all our soul, and all our strength, we sometimes find ourselves in those humiliating situations which vex us and make us desolate ; we feel ourselves grown dull, and incapable of heartily producing any act of the love of God, even though we use all our efforts to form them, and in a certain state of indifference, of languor, of darkness, of dryness, and even of insensibility and disgust, which alarms us.

Most great Saints have experienced these hard trials, which have sometimes even been chastisements for their least act of unfaithfulness : but this is also the time in which they have most laboured to raise themselves out of it, persuaded that they could not give God a greater proof of their fidelity and of the fervour of their love.

For there is only sweetness in loving God, when we feel it a pleasure to tell Him that we love Him with all our heart ; but the most devoted and the

most fervent love is to love Him without feeling that we love Him, to be raised above heaviness and dryness, and not to cease to seek Him, though He may not cease to hide Himself.

SECOND PART.

"Put ye on the Lord JESUS CHRIST," says the great Apostle. (Rom. xiii. 14.)

Be assured that the most excellent remedy to awaken us from spiritual heaviness and languor, is to take CHRIST for our example, to have recourse to Him, and to clothe ourselves with His spirit, since He hath loved us fervently, and came down upon earth to kindle on all sides the fire of Divine love.

And verily this fervour is nothing less than a Heavenly and never-dying flame, coming from the Heart of CHRIST as from its focus and its furnace, which takes possession of our hearts, kindles them with a Divine warmth, shines and every where throws light, which impels the soul to ascend to God, to seek God, to unite herself to God, to possess God; which renders her vigilant, prompt, and courageous, in undertaking all and in executing all which God commands her, however difficult it may appear to her. Examine if such be thy dispositions.

It was this fire which the Prophet felt when he said of himself: "My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned." (Ps. xxxix. 3.) It was with this fire that the disciples at Emmaus were inflamed, when Jesus appeared to them after His Resurrection, and which made them say one to another: "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?" (Luke xxiv. 32.) Happy art thou if thou mayest experience this same burning love after a devout Communion.

I know that it is very difficult to maintain an equal fervour, and that the soul, sometimes weighed down

by the load of that body of flesh which she quickens, sometimes falls into discouragement : but then she ought to feel her weakness, humble herself for it, use every means to awake from her drowsiness, and draw near again to JESUS, that she may obtain new warmth. A torch recently extinguished, and still smoking, resumes its flame as soon as it is brought near the fire and the light, and burns as before, because it still preserves a portion of its heat and of its inclination towards the fire ; thou wilt quickly resume thy first fervour, so soon as thou shalt again draw near to JESUS.

AFFECTIONS.

Thou willest that I should love Thee, O my GOD ! What can be more glorious for me, since I am nothing, and Thou art my GOD, my Creator, and my Saviour ? What can be more just ? Thou didst love me first, Thou hast given me Thy Blood upon the Cross, and Thou dost ² give me Thy Body, Thy Soul, and Thy Divinity, as my nourishment at Thy Holy Table, and Thou hast promised Heaven to me as the reward of my love ; ungrateful, indeed, should I be did I not love Thee ! besides, I should be most blind if I loved not That which is most lovely, and which is alone above all worthy of love.

But Thou willest that I should love Thee with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength, which is called loving Thee fervently. Ah, Lord ! this is all my desire ; help me then to love Thee as Thou willest that I should love Thee. Take my heart into Thine own Hands (Manual. ap. S. Aug.) if Thou wouldest have it wholly, lest it should escape from me ; do Thou alone govern my soul, lest she

² Daily. [Orig.] Spiritual communions may be daily, or, it has been suggested, where there is great devotion, oftener. Devotions for "Spiritual Communion" have lately been published. [Ed.]

should wander among created objects; direct my understanding, lest it should lose itself in its own thoughts; elevate my love, lest, after having been fixed on Thee, it should fall into the mire; uphold all my powers, all my senses, all my organs, all that I am, lest I should attach myself to something which is not Thee. Attract me, draw me towards those heavenly streams of most fervent love, of which Thou art the Fountain, and for which my soul is all athirst.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON FERVOUR.

Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? (Luke xxiv. 32.)

Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. (Rom. xii 11.)

O Love, who ever burnest and never consumest!
O Charity, my God! kindle me! (S. Aug. Conf. x. 29.)

What can be more worthy of love, than that Love by Which thou lovest, and by Which Thou art beloved? (S. Bern. l. 5. de Consid.)

FIFTH POINT OF THE INCARNATION.

THE SHEPHERD BECAME A LAMB.

To none does the office of Shepherd of souls belong of right so just, none can fulfil it in its whole truth, but the Almighty God, Who is their Creator. As He hath drawn them forth from nothing, He knoweth them perfectly; as He is infinitely Wise, He Alone knoweth how to lead them; as He loves them, because they are the work of His Hands, He nourisheth them, He leadeth them back to the fold when they

stray, He carrieth them when they are weak, and He healeth them when they are sick ; and this it was which made the Royal Prophet exclaim : " I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost ; O Lord, seek Thy servant." (Ps. cxix. 176.)

The WORD ceased not to be our Shepherd because He became Incarnate. He hath Himself said that He is the good Shepherd, Who yielded up His soul to death, and Who gave His Life for the sheep ; and this He did upon Calvary ; but through an overflowing tenderness, He uniteth this sacred quality of Shepherd to that of Lamb. What could be more sweet, what could be more lovely !

Go to the Manger to adore and embrace this Lamb ; He will be dumb as a sheep before her shearers, that thou mayest be clothed, says the Prophet Isaiah (ch. liii. 7) : there wilt thou find that Lamb, says he again, Who, although weak in appearance, is nevertheless King of the whole earth (Isa. xvi. 1) : a Lamb so full of meekness, says Jeremiah (ch. xi. 19), that He will allow Himself to be led to the sacrifice, and to be brought to the slaughter without resistance, that He may save thy life ; the Lamb of God, said St. John, Who taketh upon Him the sins of the world to expiate and efface them ; go there, I say, to render Him thy homage, to bestow on Him thy love and tender affection : He is meek, He will allow and suffer them. But forget not that this Lamb will hereafter be seated on His heavenly throne, as Sovereign Lord of Heaven and of earth. Let the Blood of the Lamb then be sprinkled on thee, as it was on the Israelites when they came out of Egypt, if thou wouldest be spared in the dreadful Day of His Vengeance. Recollect also that this Lamb hath a Book of Life, in which He hath written the names of the Elect : and blessed are they that shall be found therein. (Rev. xxi. 27.) Follow Him now in His Sufferings, if

thou wouldst eternally adore Him upon His Heavenly Throne.

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

DEUS, converte nos ; ostende faciem tuam, et salvi erimus.

Turn us again, O God, shew us the Light of Thy Countenance, and we shall be whole. (Ps. lxxx. 3.)

The First Friday in Advent.

DAY OF LIGHT.

PRACTICE.

WHILST leaving thy bed and the shadows of night, in order to enjoy the brightness of the day, entreat God, at the same time offering Him thy heart when thou awakest, to disperse its darkness, and to illumine it with His Divine Light. Often say to Him during the day, in the words of the Royal Prophet ; " O Lord, my God, make my darkness to be light." (Ps. xviii. 28.) Trust not to thine own light, do nothing, undertake nothing, until thou hast first asked help from the Father of Lights.

MEDITATION UPON ENLIGHTENED BLINDNESS.

TAKEN FROM THE EPISTLE FOR SUNDAY.

FIRST PART.

" The day is at hand ; let us therefore cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light." (Rom. xiii. 12.)

The great Day of our Saviour's Birth draws near, that most blessed of all days : let us desire it, let us

wait for it, but let us prepare for it ; and soon we shall see our darkness dispelled by the supernatural and beneficent light of Him Who cometh to "give light unto men." When the first blush of morning light begins to dawn, the whole earth lays aside her mourning garb, the shadows of night disappear, all nature resumes her beauty and her joyous attire : the Morning Light is about to arise upon Bethlehem and upon the whole earth, the Sun of Righteousness is about to appear ; let us then lay aside the works of darkness, that we may put upon us the armour of light. Examine if thou art not in darkness, and employ every means to come forth from it. But that thou mayest succeed in this examination, thou must first acknowledge that all men are born in darkness since all are born in sin ; and that although our Baptism has restored us to light, since It has conferred grace upon us, yet although effacing original sin, as to its guilt, It has not set us free from evil concupiscence, which is another source of blindness.

There is a blindness which forms itself in the mind, and there is another in the heart ; there is one in works, which is the consequence of the other two, and which the Apostle calls "the works of darkness." Seriously examine all these ; examine the prejudices of thy mind, its obstinacy, its secret pride, its false lights, its frivolity, its dissipations, its thoughts, its curiosity, its ignorances ; examine the attachments of thy heart, its antipathies, its too great sensibility, its self-love, and the faults it makes thee commit ; but examine thy works, perhaps among them thou wilt find "works of darkness," either in vanity, or in self-indulgence, or in slothfulness, or in loss of time. Examine them, reform them, and have no longer any thought, any feelings, or any works but those of "light," for the Day of the Lord is at hand.

SECOND PART.

Put on the armour of Light. Let us walk honestly as in the day.

If thou weighest these words of the great Apostle St. Paul (Rom. xiii. 12, 13,) in the balance of the sanctuary, thou wilt find two great truths in them, conceived in few words, which may prove of great help to thee. The first is, that we are strong when we walk by the guidance of that light which comes from God, and that consequently we are weak indeed when we walk in darkness, or are guided only by our own light, which is flickering and unsteady. "Let us put on," says St. Paul, "the armour of light." Light then is armed, and hath strength to resist her enemies: how great a consolation for me! how great a help! The kingly Prophet had deeply experienced this when he said: "The Lord is my strength and my salvation; of whom then shall I be afraid?" (Ps. xxvii. 1.) Thus what I ought to do, when I feel my weakness, is, to run to that Light, to clothe myself anew with that armour, and I shall be sure of victory.

The second truth is, that in order to walk securely in the paths of salvation, "we must," says the Apostle, (Rom. xiii. 13,) walk "as in the day," that is to say, in the light; we walk neither boldly nor securely during the darkness of night; we often stumble, and are nigh to falling. When our soul is enlightened by the Father of Lights, and we do nothing without asking His illumination, and without consulting Him; when we carefully obtain the Divine Presence of the Sun of Righteousness, we walk securely: "the Lord is on my right hand," says the Prophet (Ps. xvi. 8), "I shall not be moved; if the Lord is my Light, and my Salvation," concludes this holy king (Ps. xxvii. 1), "whom then shall I fear?" Participate in His Light,

and thou wilt not be confounded; and acknowledge that if thou hast been so miserable as to fall into some flagrant sin, it was because thou hadst withdrawn thyself from His Divine Light: that withdrawal had cast thee into darkness, and in that darkness the works of darkness alone can be fulfilled.

AFFECTIONS.

O Almighty Lord, Father of Light, Who hath "set a Tabernacle for the Sun," "lighten the eyes of my soul," said the Prophet (Ps. xix. 5), "that I sleep not in death, lest mine enemy say, 'I have prevailed against him.'" (Ps. xiii. 3, 4.) Fount of darkness, into which I have cast myself, which has deprived me of Light by depriving me of Thy Grace (Ps. xviii. 11): for, alas! well may I employ the same language as that penitent and holy king used after his sin. "O Lord, I am troubled, because of my sin; my heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me." (Ps. xxxviii. 3. 6. 10.)

But, O God of Light, Thou Who dispellest the thickest darkness, since Thou dost shine from the top of the eternal mountains which Thou inhabitest, graciously look upon me to destroy, to dispel, or at least to reform my works of darkness (Ps. lxxvi. 3); and the thickest and darkest "night" of my iniquities "shall be light about me," even light as the noon-day; my darkness will be changed into light. (Ps. cxxxix. 11.)

Lift Thou up upon me the light of Thy Countenance, teach me in Thy holy laws; in teaching them to me, give me to understand them; and in enlightening my mind, Thou wilt enlarge my heart to love them, and to run with giant strides the way of Thy Commandments, and of Thy Testimonies. (Ps. cxix.)

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE
FATHERS.

UPON ENLIGHTENED BLINDNESS.

Woe unto them that put darkness for light, and light for darkness. (Isa. v. 20.)

Light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light. (John iii. 19.)

Man is enlightened so long as God is present with him; he is darkened so soon as God is absent. (S. Aug. de gen. ad lit. viii. 12.)

If thou wouldest see the Eternal Light, first be careful to be in the light by the purity of the flesh; this is a necessary condition. (Hug. Car. in Gen. iv.)

FIFTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

THE LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

"God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." Such is the Divine Theology, which the well-beloved Disciple taught, having learnt it of JESUS CHRIST Himself. (1 John i. 5—7.)

All is light in God; "He dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto." (1 Tim. vi. 16.) The Father of Heaven is called the "Father of lights," from Whom "every good gift and every perfect gift" cometh down, "with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James i. 17.) The Son is the God of lights, He is begotten from all eternity in "the beauty of holiness." (Ps. cx. 3.) And the HOLY SPIRIT is He upon Whom the faithful call for help when they have need of light.

These three Adorable Persons have concurred in the sacred mystery of the Incarnation ; the FATHER hath determined it, the SON hath submitted Himself and made Himself man, and the HOLY GHOST hath carried out the Divine work. Hence it is indeed a mystery of light, which made the Prophet Isaiah say, when speaking to Jerusalem of this mystery (Is. lx. 1—3), "Arise, shine ; for thy Light is come, His glory shall be seen in thee, and the Gentiles shall come to thy Light."

JESUS CHRIST came, says the well-beloved Disciple (John i. 5. 9), "to lighten every man," and this Light shineth in darkness ; nevertheless, I here see nought but the appearance of darkness, for the Saviour cometh in the shadows of night, albeit He is the Author of Light ; it is true that, according to the Prophet (Ps. cxxxix. 12), that night "shall shine as the day ;" lightened by that "True Light," which is JESUS CHRIST ; lightened by the Angels who descend from Heaven ; lightened by the brightness which conducteth the shepherds to the stable ; thus even the darkness of that Birth hath something so great about it, that "as is the darkness so is the light ;" *Sicut tenebræ ejus, ita et lumen ejus.* (Ibid.)

Let us then respect even this darkness, which hath nothing in it but what is mysterious and holy ; let us go to God by this darkness, and by the obscure paths of faith, and we shall be lightened ; let us put away the works of darkness, and let us "walk as children of light." (Eph. v. 8.)

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Emitte agnum, Domine, dominatorem terræ, de petra deserti ad montem filiæ Sion.

Send, O Lord, the Lamb the Ruler of the land, from the rock of the wilderness, unto the mount of the daughter of Zion. (Isa. xvi. 1. Vulg.)

NOTICE.—[The feast of the Conception¹ of the Virgin Mary is arranged for the following day; it may be displaced when it falls before or after, and changed with the day whose place it will then occupy.]

¹ The Festival of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin has been retained in our own Calendar, and the fact that on the last revision of our Prayer-Book two days were added to the list of those thus commemorated, although without any especial service assigned, alone shows that they are in some way meant to influence the private devotion or religious frame of mind of individuals. The meditations in the original express the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, which was left as an open question by the Council of Trent also. The language has been altered, not as expressing any opinion, but as leaving it open to the piety of individuals. The one point which that doctrine is intended to guard, the entire purity of that flesh of which our Lord took His sacred Humanity, is equally secured, whether we believe (with St. Augustine) that she was born in original sin, or (with St. Bernard, St. Thomas, and St. Bonaventura,) that she was conceived in it only, and sanctified in her mother's womb; or that she was, according to the opinion now popular in the West, altogether exempt from the consequences of the law of our birth. For the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, in any case, gave her an entire purity previous to the Conception of our Lord. And certainly the more thoughtful writers have held it to be most accordant with the doctrine of the transmission of original sin, that being conceived after the order of nature, her's should, as St. Augustine says, be of the mass of sinful flesh, even though sanctified in her mother's womb, so that it should be reserved for CHRIST Alone, Who was not conceived after the flesh, to be free from all taint, and to be the Saviour of her of whom He was born after the flesh, being herself subject to that law, according to which she was conceived. See S. Thom. Aq. P. 3, qu. 37.

In what follows, the passages quoted in the lower margin have been substituted, the Editor preferring to substitute the language of others, rather than his own. [Ed.]

The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

DAY OF PURITY.

PRACTICE.

SAY, when thou wakest, as the Angel did to Jacob, "Let me go, for the day breaketh." JESUS CHRIST is the Sun, but His Mother may well be called the "day-breaking", for her birth was the dawn of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, the herald of that great mystery which was the end of all the promises and predictions of God, the longing of the Patriarchs, the Salvation for which the nations wished, "God manifest in the flesh." He created her to be His Mother, and her birth was the pledge and forerunner of His. As "Eve" was to man the occasion of death, since, by her, death came into the world, so Mary was made the occasion of life, through whom Life was born to us." But how great must have been the purity conferred on her, in whom, "as in an habitation, God willed for nine whole months to dwell; of which the Holy Wisdom of God would build Himself an eternal house." So then "having first purified the Virgin, He showed by His Birth that where CHRIST is, there is all purity. He cleansed her, preparing her by His HOLY SPIRIT, and thus the Virgin conceived Him in her purified womb." Think on that ineffable purity, and pray Him Who bestowed it upon

² "Hail, full of grace, dawn of the spiritual sun."—Paraphrase in Hom. i. in Annunc. ap. S. Greg. Thaum. p. 17.

³ What follows is a substitution, chiefly in the language of writers quoted by Petav. de Incarn. xiv. 8.

⁴ Epiph. Hær. 78. § 18.

⁵ Rupert in Cant. l. 1.

⁶ Given to S. Ephr. Opp. Lat. p. 670, E. quoted by Pet.

her, to bestow on thee purity of mind, of heart, and of body.

MEDITATION UPON THE PURITY CONFERRED
ON ST. MARY, FROM THE GOSPEL.

OF WHOM WAS BORN JESUS, WHO IS CALLED CHRIST.

FIRST PART.

All the festivals of St. Mary have reference to her Son, for Whom she herself was ; and so in the two festivals, which seem to centre in herself, her Conception and her Nativity, the Gospel appointed is that portion which relates to the birth of her Son, to conceive and bear Whom was the end of her Conception and Birth. To-day, on the festival "of a child who will not be born for nine months," is rehearsed "her glorious destination, and her Divine maternity ;" she is conceived to-day, and the Gospel relates, "That it is of her that was born JESUS, Who is called CHRIST."

Verily, how much more than angelic purity must have been conferred on that body from which will one day be taken That of JESUS, which signifies a Saviour. The flesh of Mary is to become That of JESUS, says St. Bernard, and the blood which shall be taken from her will be That of CHRIST. That Flesh will one day be torn, and That Blood shed upon the Cross, and will be the instrument and the price of the redemption of mankind. What degree then of purity must not have been bestowed on that flesh and blood !

This "JESUS is called CHRIST," that is, the most pure and the most glorious of all anointings, since it is the anointing of the Divinity : that flesh now formed, will be, after the ineffable operation of the HOLY GHOST, the Flesh of GOD ; the Divinity will therein corporeally dwell ; she will be the ark⁷, and

⁷ Serm. i. in Annunc. ap. S. Greg. Thaum. p. 13, though not his.

overlaid with gold within and without, which shall receive the whole treasure of sanctification. For 'the Angel having said, 'Hail, full of grace,' added, 'the Lord is with thee,' no earthly husband, but the Lord Himself of holiness, the Father of purity, the Creator of incorruption, the Giver of freedom, the Bestower of salvation, the Dispenser of true peace, Who of the virgin earth formed man, and of his rib took Eve, this LORD is with thee, and, again, of thee. For from the pure and chaste and undefiled and holy Virgin Mary cometh forth JESUS CHRIST our Lord, perfect in His Godhead and in His Manhood, consubstantial with the Father, consubstantial with us also in all things except sin." What purity then must not that flesh have!

Mary is that pure dove, typified by that which Noah sent forth from the ark, who, finding at first nothing but impurity in the waters empoisoned by the remains of the dead, returned quickly into the ark; but who, again sent forth, came in with an olive leaf in her mouth, which the deluge had spared; she brings with her that original purity which our first parents had lost, for she brings forth Him, the Fountain of all purity, the Fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. Let us respect this purity conferred on Mary, and we cannot honour it better than by preserving our own purity, or in repairing it, if we have miserably lost it.

SECOND PART.

Of whom was born JESUS, Who is called CHRIST. (Matt. i. 16.)

It appears as if this oracle of the Gospel gives me the right, nay, even invites me to enter respectfully into the eternal decree of the predestination of Mary, the Mother of GOD, since it developes it before us,

* Ib. p. 12.

with sufficient clearness, by telling us beforehand that it is of her that JESUS was born. Mary then was only fore-ordained for JESUS' sake, because she was to be His Mother, without having man as His father, that is, that her blood and her flesh were to concur in unity of principle in the formation of Him Who is both God and man; and JESUS CHRIST was fore-ordained, only that He might redeem man with His most precious Blood, Which is That Which He hath taken from Mary. "The Author⁹ of all things derived His origin from her, and from her body received the blood which was to be shed for the life of the world; He took of her what He was also to pay for her." The decree of the Mother's fore-ordination is enclosed in that of her Son, Who is JESUS and the CHRIST. JESUS must be Purity Itself; it must needs be fitting, that she of whom He was to be born "should" by Him have been purified from sin, and in that her purity from Him, He was taken from her; and since the purity of His Mother, whereby He was pure, was only from Him, thus also it was from Himself and by Himself that He was pure." "Yea", it was fitting that with purity, than which no greater can be conceived short of God Himself, should that Virgin be arrayed, to whom God the Father so purposed to give His Only-Begotten Son, Whom being born of Himself, Coequal with Himself, He loved as Himself, that One and the Same should be by nature Son of God the Father and of the Virgin; she, whom the Son Himself chose to make to be a mother to Himself of her substance; she, of whom the HOLY SPIRIT willed, and was about to operate,

⁹ Added from the writer called Euseb. Emiss. Orat. ii. de Nativ., quoted by Pet. xiv. 2. 5.

¹ Substituted from St. Anselm, Cur Deus homo sit, ii. 16, fin.

² Id. de concept. Virg. et orig. pec. c. 18.

that He should be conceived and born, of Whom Himself proceeded."

Well then may she be entitled "full of grace," who was to be the mother of her Creator, of her God, and of her Saviour; the "receptacle" of heavenly joy, through whom joy was dispersed to the whole creation, in whose arms was to be borne the Creator of all things." She "the sanctuary prepared" for God, of her Incarnate; "the Chamber of His Incarnation," "the pure bridal of His Nativity after the Flesh," whence He came forth, rejoicing, as a giant, to run His course; "the living temple of God," "the comprehending dwelling-place of the Incomprehensible Nature," that "pure Virginal earth from which the New Adam was formed, by a Divine and Ineffable Operation, that He might save the old Adam; that new ark of the Divine Glory, wherein the Spirit of God lighted and rested; the ark wherein He Who is by Nature Holy, did, by the word of the Incarnation, in the virgin workhouse of nature, form for Himself that Holy Nature of a new and excellent Glory, not changing what He was, for He was Unchangeable, but taking what He was not, for He loved us³."

Since He then thus purified our nature and made it His, have thou henceforth the greatest horror of the least stain, cleanse the smallest soils of thy heart, and use every means for acquiring true purity, that thou mayest be well-pleasing to Him who betrothed our human nature, that He might be our Peace, and Sanctification, and Redemption⁴.

³ From Hom. 2 and 3, in Annunc. ap. S. Greg. Thaum. c. pp. 16. 27. 29.

⁴ From S. Andr. Cret. in Annunc. p. 3.

⁵ From Hom. in Annunc. ap. S. Greg.

AFFECTIONS⁶.

O Spouse of virgins, give me a true love for purity of mind, of heart, and of body, and a sincere hatred of the least soil which might tarnish their lustre. Guard my imagination, that no corruption ever enter, delivering it from all fantastic thoughts which might sully it; my memory, effacing all perilous recollections of aught which might wound it; my mind, by banishing all contrary thoughts; my heart, which should be a sanctuary consecrated to the purity of God, if so be Thou wouldest vouchsafe to descend thither, and take delight therein; mine eyes, ruling all my looks by modesty; my tongue, inspiring it with horror for all equivocal words; mine ears, closing them against all discourse which might wound this purity; my flesh, ever subjecting it to the Spirit, that so I may be worthily prepared to celebrate Thy Birth, O Thou Who takest pleasure and delight only "among the lilies" of pure souls, who are Thy spouses.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON PURITY.

God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. (Ps. xlv. 5.)

Into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter; nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin. (Wisdom i. 4.)

Purity in a wise soul is infinitely pleasing to God; in her doth He dwell, and taketh delight therein as in His own image. (S. Ant. de Morib. Monach.)

Pure must be the dwelling-place of an infinitely pure God. (Med. c. 35, ap. S. Aug.)

⁶ The first sentence is omitted, and the whole changed into a prayer to our Lord, the words being retained. [ED.]

SEVENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

A VIRGIN MOTHER.

A virgin to become a mother is an unexampled and unheard-of miracle; a mother to conceive and bear a child without losing her virginity, is the most wondrous prodigy which hath ever issued from the Hands of God; and He of Whom she is the Mother, could scarce be other than God Himself.

The virginity of Mary infinitely surpasses that of all earthly virgins; it is a fruitful, and consequently a miraculous virginity. As a virgin she conceived; as a virgin, Scripture saith, she should "bear⁷ a Son;" she is that eastern gate of the sanctuary⁸ through whom the Redeemer entered into this world; when born of a Virgin-birth He dissolved not the bars of the Virgin's womb⁹. Mary is a Virgin, but she is a mother, and He of Whom she is the Mother, is God: what glory! what greatness!

Virginity hath its fitting gifts as well as maternity; some privations, however, are consequent to both, in all excepting Mary, the Mother of God¹⁰. Purity hath ever formed the honour of virginity, but it is barren, and this barrenness in the Old Testament was its disgrace; fruitfulness forms the honour of maternity, but it is sullied, and this is its shame. The blessed Virgin hath all the purity of virginity without its sterility; her maternity hath all the honour of fruitfulness, without having its stain; such then is her glory.

"Blessed¹ Nativity of our Lord JESUS CHRIST,

⁷ Is. vii.

⁸ Ezek. xlv. 2, 3.

⁹ Substituted from S. Ambr. de inst. Virg.

¹⁰ La divine Marie. [Orig.]

¹ A passage attributed to St. Ildephonso, not occurring in the work quoted, and now no longer thought to be his, two of St. Leo, upon purity, quoted in that work, have been substituted from Ser. x. de Nat. Dom. § 4, and Ser. ii. § 2. The

which surpasseth all understanding. Blessed fruitfulness, promised by words of prophecy and mystic types, announced by an archangel, which should injure holy virginity neither by conception nor by birth. For when the HOLY SPIRIT came upon her, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her, of her undefiled body did the unchangeable Word of God take the form of human flesh, deriving no contagion from concupiscence of the flesh, and yet destitute of nothing belonging to the nature of soul or body. By a new Nativity was He born of her, conceived by a virgin, born of a virgin, without concupiscence of a father's flesh, without injury to a mother's integrity, because such a birth became the future Saviour, Who should in Himself have the nature of our human substance, yet know not the defilements of human flesh. For He must needs be born by a new order of things Who was to give to the bodies of men a new grace of undefiled purity. He must in His birth keep unharmed His mother's virgin-estate, and the infused virtue of the HOLY SPIRIT preserve that abode of holiness which He had vouchsafed to choose, Who purposed to raise the fallen, to strengthen the broken, to impart to chastity a manifold power for overcoming the enticements of the flesh, that the virgin-state, which in others' birth could not be preserved, might yet in others through re-birth be imitable."

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Revertere, Virgo Israel, revertere; creavit Dominus novum super terram; mulier circumdabit virum.

Turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again, for the Lord hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man. (Jer. xxxi. 21, 22.)

following passage from St. Thomas Aq. no longer fitted in, "By this that she is Mother of God she hath a sort of infinite dignity from the Infinite Good, Which is God." (P. 1. q. 25, art. 6, ad 4.) [ED.]

The Second Sunday in Advent.

DAY OF SUFFERINGS².

PRACTICE.

As there are not every day occasions of suffering, it is necessary that thou shouldest look to the preparation of thy heart, and make it ready to suffer, and to suffer well all the most afflicting things which will come upon thee, when it shall please God. Begin the day by asking God's pardon for all the faults which thou hast hitherto committed in the sufferings which have happened to thee; make up for them to-day by mortifying thyself, more especially by the deprivation of every thing which might give thee pleasure; fix thy attention upon this, and thou wilt not fail to find some suitable occasion.

MEDITATION UPON SUFFERINGS.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

When John had heard in the prison the works of CHRIST, he sent two of his disciples. (Matt. xi. 2.)

Enter in spirit into the dismal prison where Herod hath shut up John Baptist: see there a righteous man, a Prophet, a Forerunner, laden with chains in the cause of justice and of chastity, destined to the shameful death of a criminal, and suffering without complaint: exclaim, at this affecting sight, with a holy doctor (St. Chrys. hic.): Lord, Thou dost here give us a perfect model, that Thou mayest teach us how to suffer; and Thou settest before us the ex-

² This, as falling upon the weekly festival of the Resurrection, might be interchanged with some other day. [ED.]

ample of this distinguished martyr, in order to condemn our cowardice, and to excite me, sinner that I am, to suffer for my sins and for the love of Thee. Woe is me, if I make not a holy use of it, and if I strive not to satisfy Thy Justice during this life; but, alas! how have I hitherto suffered, and how ought I to suffer henceforward, when sorrow shall come upon me! Teach me, O my Lord.

There needed nothing less than this courageous servant of God, in affliction and bonds, in order to prepare men's minds for the coming of a Saviour and the reception of the religion which He was to establish, a religion which was to be one of crosses and of sufferings. There needed nothing less than this invincible martyr of the expiring Synagogue and dawning Christianity, in order to prepare the way for a Saviour Who was to open the gates of Heaven by His Sufferings and His Blood.

From this it followeth, that we must suffer willingly, if we would prepare for ourselves the ways which lead to the cradle of Jesus, and be found worthy of the graces which are attached to the Birth of a Saviour, if we would bear, as we ought, the sacred name of Christians, and if we would one day partake in the eternal happiness which is prepared for us in Heaven. Here sound the dispositions of thy heart, examine thy conduct when thou art in affliction, and reform it after the example of him who was sent before the Face of CHRIST.

SECOND PART.

It was needful that John the Baptist should suffer persecution, because he was predestined to prepare the way of "God manifest in the flesh," Who was to save us by the Cross, and Who, wholly innocent as He was, yet "went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain," as He Himself says. (Luke xxiv. 26.)

Such then was the blood-besprinkled road of the First-born of the elect; let not us then, who are sinners, wish to make for ourselves a flowery and a pleasant path, to arrive at the same end: let us not expect, we who are the disciples of a crucified God, to be saved without bearing our cross, since we are "predestined," says the Apostle (Rom. viii. 29), "to be conformed" to the image of the sorrowing Son of God, and we shall never be received into Heaven if we bear not His Image thither.

Very surprising is it, and at the same time a superabundant recompense for the Christian, that a "light affliction" should of itself "work out for us an exceeding weight of glory" in Heaven; for what comparison is there between our sufferings, which after all "are but for a moment," with a glory which is eternal? (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.) Yet God hath promised this by His Word; and His Blood, to Which our sufferings are united, gives them an infinite value.

Henceforward then look upon thy sufferings as a precious treasure; God taketh it, He maketh it of value, He bestoweth on us the interest during this life; this interest is His Grace; they also produce another treasure in the Hands of God, this is glory and eternal happiness; O how great, how innocent an usury! how gainful an exchange! how rich a contract!

What givest thou towards it on thy side? Well-nigh nothing! a contempt, a humiliation, a sickness, or a privation, suffered with patience, with constancy, and with faith; and God gives on His part His Grace, His Love, His Consolation, His Protection, His Blood, His Kingdom. Thy resignation calleth Him to thine aid, He cometh, He maketh His Presence to be felt, He is in tribulation with thee, He beareth the greater part of thy trouble, He assisteth thee to support the other, He drieth thy tears, He delivereth thee, He sanctifieth thee, He crowneth

thee. O my Lord! almost without cost on our part
Thou savest us!

AFFECTIONS.

O that I might say, Lord, with as much truth, as much faith, and as much resignation as the penitent king: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes: Bonum mihi, quia humiliasti me." (Ps. cxix. 71.) Prosperity had so blinded me, that I knew Thee not as I ought. Alas! I ill knew Thine infinite Goodness, for I did not perceive clearly that Thou dost never afflict us without bestowing upon us a grace superior to the trial to which Thou exposest us; that Thou art ever with us in tribulation; that it is Thou alone Who consolest us, and deliverest us by Thine Almighty Hand.

If Thou hadst not sometimes given me over to suffering, self-indulgence carelessness and cowardice would have attained a fearful ascendancy in my soul, and scarcely should I have inclined the ear of my heart to hearken to Thy Divine Laws, in order to love and practise them.

Yes, Lord, affliction hath ever been a blessing to me: by it Thou hast made me to walk by a light which Thine arrows ever bring with them, as said a Prophet. (Hab. iii. 11.) The remains of religion, which in the time of prosperity were on the point of being effaced from my heart, have been traced and engraven more deeply there by the wholesome sharpness of Thine arrows, which pierce the heart, only to convey within it a cure for sloth, for unfaithfulness, and for a love of sensual pleasures: Thou hast made Thyself known to me, Thou Who hast made me known to myself.

I am a sinner, and I deserve to suffer; both law and justice make me feel this, but my self-indulgence will not consent; destroy it then, O Lord; I detest

it with my whole heart; bestow on me all the courage and all the humility I need in order to submit, and to gather from my sufferings all that Divine light which is necessary to detach me from all sensible consolations, from all creatures, and from myself, that so henceforth I may attach myself only to Thee.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON SUFFERINGS.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. v. 10.)

We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. (Acts xiv. 22.)

The tribulations which press upon us, urge and force us, if we may so speak, to return towards God. (S. Greg. Mor. 7.)

God mingleth bitterness with earthly happiness, that we may seek another happiness, whose sweetness faileth not. (S. Aug. Sermon. cv. § 8. [29 de Verb. Dom.])

EIGHTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

THE BENEFACTOR IN TEARS.

God is essentially happy, because He is infinitely perfect: He is happy in Himself, and He is Alone His own felicity; He rejoiceth in Himself with infinite delight; He seeth Himself, He comprehendeth Himself, and He loveth His own adorable perfections; finally, He is Himself His own proper beatitude. All creatures together can give Him no increase of essential glory; and before His Almighty Hand had drawn them out of nothingness, He was sufficient unto Himself; in His eternal and Divine solitude He was Himself, says Tertullian¹, His Own Temple,

¹ Adv. Prax. c. v. "Before all things God was alone, Himself to Himself the world, and space, and all things. Alone,

His Own Worshipper, and His Own every thing. He it is Who is the happiness of the Saints, and "it is in Him, of Him, and by Him," says St. Augustine, "that are blessed all who are blessed." (Solil. i. c. i. § 3.)

But this Almighty God, so happy in Himself, became man; yet, though He made Himself man, neither did He give up His sacred quality of full possession of bliss², but He joined it to that of a pilgrim; He suffereth in the stable, He there sheddeth tears of tenderness and of sorrow, because He loveth us, and suffereth, and He will shed them again afterwards over Jerusalem and over Lazarus; this sorrow, this joy, at the same time and in the same Person, urge me to confess that a God happy at once and suffering is a mystery most marvellous, most incomprehensible!

That I may in some sort understand it, I have recourse to the light of faith, which tells me that love hath reduced Him (though still rejoicing in his Godhead) to that state of sorrow; He cedeth all the rights which His essential happiness giveth Him; He cometh out from Himself; He suspendeth, by a miracle of love, that communication of joy and of pleasure which should naturally exist between Divinity and humanity, now inseparably united; He restraineth the outpouring of glory upon His Body, He giveth Himself up to sorrow, He weepeth in His cradle, He bedeweth it with His Tears, for the sake of our hearts, because He willeth to purify them, to disgust them with sensible delights, by His Tears, and thus the more surely to procure for them eternal

because there was nothing without besides Him. Yet not even then alone, for He had with Him, Whom He had in Himself." [Ed.]

² See note on Boudon, Hidden Life, p. 37.

joys. Receive then those precious Tears, besprinkle thy heart with them; God weepeth, and He weepeth because "He is troubled" with the sense of thy miseries: what heart so hard but will be melted at the Tears of God, become an infant?

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Ostende nobis, Domine, misericordiam tuam, et salutare tuum da nobis.

Shew us Thy Mercy, O Lord, and grant us Thy Salvation. (Ps. lxxxv. 7.)

The Second Monday in Advent.

DAY OF FAITH.

PRACTICE.

As soon as thou awakest, go in spirit to the manger, there to make thy profession of faith at the Feet of the Infant JESUS; believe in, adore, and love the Eternal Word in His Silence, and His Humiliation; His Almightyness in His Weakness; His Divinity in His Flesh; the God of Heaven in the stable, and His Immensity enclosed in an Infant's Body; pray Him to perfect thy faith by the deepest humility, the most unmoveable constancy, and the most fervent love, and do all thine actions also in a spirit of faith.

MEDITATION UPON FAITH.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. (Matt. xi. 4, 5.)

Admire the solid foundation upon which **JESUS CHRIST** established both the Divinity of His Person and of the religion which He preached. The Saints, indeed, have worked miracles, but as they wrought them by the power of **GOD**, those miracles published their holiness, and served to confirm the religion already established ; but in order to found a religion of crosses and sufferings, there must needs be miracles wrought by the Hand of **GOD** Himself, and **JESUS CHRIST** on this occasion did very many, and those most glorious, and that too by His Own Power : this it is which incontestably shews His Divinity. What more incontestable proof of His Divinity should there be than to lighten the blinded eyes, to make the deaf to hear, to raise the dead to life again, and to do this through His own power ?

I wonder not that **JESUS** adds, "that the poor" are taught the truths of the Gospel ; pauperes evangelizantur ; who indeed could be witness to these miracles, accompanied by the life-giving words of Him Who wrought them, without surrendering themselves to Him ? What a consolation for us ! What a subject for thanksgiving ! What peace of conscience is it to see our faith so firmly rooted, to follow a religion altogether infallible, altogether Divine.

Can the mind of man, without falling into a deplorable state of wandering or into open rebellion, dispute against such testimony, sealed, in the end, by the Blood of **CHRIST**, and by that of ten thousand times ten thousand martyrs and miracles ?

SECOND PART.

Behold then, for our consolation, the faith fully established by miracles, against which no shadow of doubt can be imagined : "the blind receive their sight, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up ;" **JESUS CHRIST**, Who hath wrought these miracles,

spoke also; He teacheth the poor; to His Words He hath added His most precious Blood; the HOLY SPIRIT hath confirmed it, the Apostles have preached it over the whole world; nothing more is wanting either for its establishment or its confirmation: thou hast embraced it by Baptism; thou professest it, thy hopes are fixed on the rewards which belong to it, and which consist in nothing less than the eternal possession of the Author of thy Faith, Who is the Most High God.

Nevertheless, "prove your own self" still more, according to the counsel of the Great Apostle, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith" (2 Cor. xiii. 5); enquire of thy mind, enquire of thy heart, enquire of thy hands.

Is thy mind perfectly obedient to all the truths which she teacheth? doth it not sometimes cry out against the authority of the faith which desires to "bring it into subjection?" doth it not bring before the bar of its own judgment those truths which she obliges us to believe? doth it not listen to its own enlightenment, by reasoning too much when it ought only to obey? doth it not sometimes make use of that simplicity which she exacteth, in order to give way too much to its curiosity, in fixing itself more on that which is uncertain than upon that which is solid?

Seek her in thy heart, for there is the seat of faith as well as of infidelity; it is "in his heart," and not in his mind, that "the fool hath said, There is no God" (Ps. xiv. 1); examine its desires, its attachments, its affections, and see if faith be the rule of them. Doth not the austerity of faith sometimes disconcert them? Would it be willing to sacrifice its repose, its pleasure, its goods, its blood, rather than lose its faith? Ask thy hands what God thou adorest, for doubtless He it is for Whom they labour most;

are they not cowardly and slothful in the duties of religion, and in the austere practices of faith, whilst they are but too zealous when called upon to labour in the cause of vanity, of the world, and of self-love? This may well be the subject of a serious examination.

AFFECTIONS.

Give me, O Lord, a submissive, devoted, universal, and fervent faith; since I can neither please Thee, nor save myself without its help. I submit myself with all my heart, and I acknowledge Thee for my God, in the manger and upon the Cross, as well as in Heaven; I reverence Thy words, which are true oracles of truth, and shall be the rule of my conduct: I yield to Thy miracles, I adore Thy Divinity. Thou hast given light to the blind, O enlighten my soul with the light of faith; Thou hast made the lame to walk, O make straight my paths, that I may never wander from the way of faith and righteousness; Thou hast made the deaf to hear, O speak to my soul, make the ear of my heart attentive to Thy Divine Word, and deaf to that of the world; Thou hast raised the dead to life; I wonder not, for Thou art the Author of Life. I entreat of Thee, O Lord, the life of grace, and that life of love without which I should have but a dead faith which would serve but for my condemnation. Give me an inviolable attachment to the faith which Thou hast taught me, after having established it by Thy Word, by Thy Miracles, and by Thy Blood; and lead me from the hardnesses of faith to sight, from its austere practices to the pure and eternal joys which Thou bestowest upon the truly faithful.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.**UPON FAITH.**

I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me. (Gal. ii. 20.)

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater. (1 John v. 9.)

Love is the strength of faith, faith the strength of love. (S. Leo. Serm. vii. de Quadr. c. 2.)

Submit to thy mind that which thou hast in common with the beasts, which is thy body; but submit to God, by faith, that which thou hast in common with the Angels, which is thy mind. (S. Aug. contr. Faust.)

NINTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.**PURE SPIRIT BECOME FLESH.**

God is a Spirit, said JESUS to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 24), in that wonderful discourse He had with her, in order to purify that earthly-minded woman from all carnal imaginations, and to raise her to the knowledge of the true God, Whom she "must worship in spirit and in truth," in opposition to those false gods which were adored upon the mountain of Gerizim, to whom their blinded worshippers ascribed bodies of flesh.

He is a pure Spirit, incapable of mixture and of composition; infinitely great, without extension in space; invisible, and seeing all things; impenetrable, and penetrating all things by His infinite sublimity; sublime, and surpassing all things: He is a Spirit, the Creator of all spirits; One universal Mind, Which filleth all things, is able to do all things, quickeneth all things, and upholdeth all things.

Nevertheless this God, so great, this Spirit so pure

and so sublime, hath humbled Himself through love, even to being made man; let us say more, even to the being "made flesh" (John i. 14); words which well deserve to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary: for would it be possible to express the prodigious humiliation of the Son of God, Who is a pure Spirit, better than the well-beloved Disciple hath done, when he said: "The Word was made flesh?" And here we must remark, with St. Augustine, that the HOLY GHOST, willing to give us a perfect idea of the love and humility of the Saviour in His Incarnation, says, not simply, that He was made man, but that He was "made flesh;" expressly naming that flesh, which is the most abject and miserable part of man's nature, and the most unworthy of being hypostatically united to a pure spirit, for fear lest, employing a more noble expression, He might appear to have despised that which is most base in man: *carnem pro homine posuit*, etc. (St. Aug. hic.) It is to teach that He hath taken a newly formed flesh in the womb of Mary, that He hath waited the term of nine months to come forth thence, and that finally He willed to be born in a manner which, though altogether holy, yet had nothing in appearance which might distinguish it from that of the other sons of men.

The Word was made flesh, says St. Augustine: how great a consolation! how high an honour for men! The pure Spirit hath united Himself not only to our mind, in order to enlighten it, He Who is the source of all light, but He hath also united Himself to our flesh, in order to ennoble it, to consecrate it; He hath taken our flesh, He hath given us His, that so the flesh which had blinded us might enlighten us, the flesh which had wounded us might heal us; and by the union of His Flesh with ours, He might extinguish all our fleshly lusts: *Verbum caro factum est; caro te excæcaverat, caro te sanat, et sic venit*

ut de carne vitia carnis extingueret. (St. Aug. tract. ii. in 1 Joan.)

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Memento nostri, Domine, in beneplacito populi tui: visita nos in salutari tuo. (Ps. cvi. 4.)

Remember us, O Lord, with the favour that Thou bearest unto Thy people; O visit us with Thy Salvation.

The Second Tuesday in Advent.

DAY OF TEACHABLENESS.

PRACTICE.

BE more than ever attentive to-day in hearkening to GOD, and in receiving His Divine Word, whether spoken, or written, or inspired, with all the submission of mind and all the teachableness of heart of which thou art capable; and so soon as thou receivest it, defer not to put it in practice. Be not offended at the hardships or at the humiliations it lays upon thee, and still less at those which JESUS CHRIST hath endured for thy sake; and often say with the Prophet: "I will hear what the Lord GOD will speak." (Ps. lxxxv. 8.)

MEDITATION UPON A TEACHABLE AS OPPOSED TO A CAVILLING SPIRIT.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me. (Matt. xi. 6.)

Remember that among those to whom JESUS preached the truths of heaven, accompanied as they ever were with great miracles, some docile, teachable

hearts were found who eagerly followed Him, even into the desert, who looked upon His Words, His Life, and His Actions, as striking proofs of His Mission and of His Divinity, and who were at length converted; but there were some unteachable hearts who, far from profiting by these things, were offended at them. Jxsus here complains of the latter, and above all of the inhabitants of Chorazin, of Bethsaida, and of Capernaum; before whom He had preached and done many mighty miracles, without their being converted. And He said (Matt. xi. 18, 19): "John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

Take good heed then that thou fall not into this snare; if thou wouldest be blessed, take no offence, either at the Words or the Actions of JESUS CHRIST; reverence, nay, even adore both; they are from God; they are all ordered for His Glory, and for thy spiritual and eternal good; and every thing in them is full of deep and Divine meaning; it is in this reverence, and in this docility of mind and heart, that the true wisdom of a Christian begins; this is even the first sentence of the Book of Wisdom; make it the rule of thy conduct. "Love righteousness," says the wise man, "think of the Lord with a good heart: *sentite de Domino in bonitate*; and in simplicity of heart seek Him. (Wisdom i. 1.)

Strive to acquire this simplicity and docility of heart, in regard to all things which come from God; have a deep reverence for every word which hath proceeded from His Adorable Lips: each is full of meaning, each is adorable, and each is an eternal truth. Receive His inspirations with a heart prepared to obey Him; look upon all His Actions, all His

Conduct, all His Steps, His Humiliations, His Sufferings, with religious veneration; in them all is holy, all is great, all deserveth reverence, all is Divine, and all is ordained by the Saviour for thy salvation.

SECOND PART.

The first request that the wisest of all monarchs made to God, as soon as he had ascended the throne, was an understanding heart: *Dabis ergo servo tuo cor docile* (1 Kings iii. 9); he needed this that he might hearken unto God, might profit by his enlightenment, and might be able to impart the same to his people.

We have our own soul to guide, and that is truly enough, to guide too amidst a multitude of snares, of hidden rocks, and of enemies, which she must needs meet in her journey, and which are bent upon preventing her reaching that kingdom which is prepared for her. We have to guide a fragile body, we have our eyes, our tongue, our outward senses, our passions, our desires, our flesh to govern, and we are wanting in spiritual light; we must pray for it, we must hearken to it, we must follow it; in a word, we must in every thing consult God, and listen to Him with a teachable spirit.

Why do we so often fall? It is that we are wanting in docility. What are the springs of our indocility? If thou examinest them deeply, thou wilt find that they are thy little faith, thy secret pride, and thy sloth; thy faith is weak; thou esteemest not enough that which comes from God, and that which God hath done for thee, and thou dost not attend to it enough; the mysteries do not sufficiently strike thee, thou thinkest of them but little and unfixedly, thou forgettest them easily; the Divine Word and inspirations do not make enough impression on thy soul, and thou neglectest them.

Our secret pride takes part against us ; we would that the humility of the Manger were effaced from the Gospel ; we would have willingly followed JESUS to labour, but His Humiliations disconcert and offend us ; our self-indulgence is mixed with it also, it cannot accommodate itself to the hardships which JESUS CHRIST endured in the stable and upon the Cross, nor to those which He exacts of us in order to reach the blessedness which He hath promised us, and the least mortification affrights our sensuality. Examine thyself upon this important point.

AFFECTIONS.

No, Lord ; however grievous may be the thing that Thou layest upon me, never will I contradict the words of the Holy One, said the blessed Job (vi. 10. Vulg.), for Thou art my God, my Creator, my Saviour, and my Sovereign Lord, and, therefore, I must obey Thee. Never will I be offended either at Thy Words, which are the oracles of truth, nor at Thine Actions, which are holy, nor at what Thou shalt require of me, however hard it may appear to me, for Thou lovest me, and Thy laws, which are Divine, can never surpass the strength which Thou Thyself hast given me, but will conduct me safely to the sovereign bliss to which I aspire.

Henceforward I will hearken to Thy Divine inspirations with such reverence, with such attention, with such teachableness ; I will execute them with such courage, and with such fidelity, that I hope one day I may speak to Thee in the words of the Royal Prophet (Ps. xxvi. 3), and with the same holy confidence : " Lord, I have walked in Thy Truth," I have walked stedfastly in the most rough and difficult paths ; 1st, because Thou hast commanded me to walk therein, and they are the holy laws which came forth from Thy Adorable Mouth ; and, 2ndly,

because Thou hast not only marked out the way through them for me by Thine Example, but hast smoothed them for me by Thy grace.

Henceforward it will be enough for me, O my God, in order to induce me to self-restraint, to say to myself: My God wills it, He hath spoken, I have heard Him in mine inmost heart, He hath brought it before my sight, He hath inspired me with it; what am I that I should oppose myself to Him or resist Him? I will ever say to Thee as young Samuel did (1 Sam. iii. 10): "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," and is ready to obey Thy voice.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON TEACHABLENESS.

I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me: for He shall speak peace. (Ps. lxxxv. 8.)

O let me hear Thy loving-kindness betimes in the morning, for in Thee is my trust. (Ps. cxliii. 8.)

He who heareth the word of God with negligence, is as guilty as he who through his own negligence should allow the Body of CHRIST to fall to the ground. (Cæsar. ap. S. Aug. App. Sermon. 300.)

Many readily bear the sign of CHRIST upon their forehead, who receive not the word of CHRIST into their heart. (S. Aug. in Joh. Ev. tr. l. § 1.)

TENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

PROVIDENCE IN WANT.

Since God is the inexhaustible source of all treasure, and His riches, immense as they are, are accompanied with infinite goodness and infinite wisdom, it follows that He provides for all by His Providence, and yet can He neither impoverish Himself,

nor can anything ever be lacking to any of those whom He hath created, either for their subsistence, or for their preservation, from the noblest and the greatest, to the most abject and the least of His creatures, from man to the worm of the earth, from the whale to the gnat; because He loveth every thing which hath come forth from His Hands; He scattereth afar His Fulness, without its ever suffering any void, and He can continually give, and give infinitely, without His own riches ever diminishing.

Nevertheless this God, so full of riches, hath made Himself man through the exceeding greatness of His Love; and in becoming man, He voluntarily made Himself poor, by choice and by preference; that so He might detach us from riches, and bind us more strongly to Himself, inspiring us with a true desire for the treasures which are spiritual and eternal, grace and glory, by giving us a contempt for temporal and perishing goods, as great hindrances to those which are so infinitely more precious.

In coming into the world He chose a family destitute of the goods of fortune, and He willed that His Holy Mother should have a spouse whose only resource for sustaining life was the moderate profit of a mechanical art. And in His parents He exposes Himself to all the repulses and all the affronts inseparable from poverty. But what will Joseph and Mary determine to do? A poor, uncovered, and abandoned stable is to be all their resource; a stable destitute of all the conveniences of life, and it is in this resting-place of animals, and upon straw, that Mary is about to bring forth Him Who is God; God to Whom belong all the treasures of Heaven and of earth, and Who willeth to be born poor for our sakes.

Go in spirit into that rustic shed, see there thy God in such want and extreme poverty, as would melt thy heart if thou sawest the meanest of His

creatures in a like extremity : go there that thou mayest learn to suffer, and even to love poverty ; thou wilt see there, says one, the Mother on a little hay, the Son in a stable, His Bed in a manger, and for kingly ornaments poor swaddling-clothes. Is not this a sight which might well move us to tears ? Mater in fœno, Filius in stabulo, et in ornatu regio laciniae congeruntur. (Arnold. Abbot de Nat. Dom. c. 2.)

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Salvos fac nos, Domine Deus noster, et congrega nos de nationibus, ut confiteamur nomini sancto tuo.

Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Thy Holy Name. (Ps. cvi. 47.)

The Second Wednesday in Advent.

DAY OF MORTIFICATION.

PRACTICE.

DECLARE implacable war with self during the whole day, and look upon self as thy most dangerous enemy : "sustain and abstain," according to the counsel of St. Augustine ; "sustain," suffer every thing which presents itself ; "abstain," deprive thyself of every thing which could give thee pleasure ; watch over thy senses, over thy taste, over thy tongue, over thine ears. Regard¹ thyself as a dying man, and permit thy senses no indulgence which will sorrow thee, and need repentance at that awful hour ; at the close of the day, demand of thyself an exact account how thou hast kept this rule, and punish thyself for the least transgression.

¹ Altered, since we have not the rite alluded to. [Ed.]

MEDITATION UPON MORTIFICATION.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

"JESUS began to say unto the multitudes, concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses." (Matt. xi. 7, 8.)

After JESUS had sent away the messengers of John the Baptist, He graciously went on to address these words to those who remained near Him, and to give them a touching instruction upon mortification, proposing to them the Great Forerunner as an example; He speaks to them of the roughness and coarse texture of his raiment, comparing it with the "soft clothing" of the great of this world; He speaks to them of his solitude, of his food, and of his life, alike fearful to sensuality; and He concludes by saying, that he is the greatest of the children of men, thus showing that it was his mortification which had gained him his greatness.

Apply thyself to a full acquaintance with this virtue, the virtue of JESUS, of John Baptist, and of all the Saints, and which, consequently, must be thine, if thou wouldest be saved. Mortification is a sort of death, as its name shows; but a death which giveth life, which maketh us die to sin and to concupiscence, that we may live to grace and to love: die to the world, die to self, that we may live with CHRIST, Who laboreth without intermission at the extinction of self-love, of lukewarmness, of sloth, and of sensual pleasures, that the love of God may be made to reign, which alone is the true life of the soul; it is this which made St. Augustine say: Die this death, if thou wouldest live the true life, which is that of grace and of glory; be buried even alive in

the grave of mortification, if thou wouldest live again : Morere ut vivas, sepelire ut resurgas. (S. Aug. de Verb. Ap.)

Look upon mortification as a privation, a withdrawal, and a separation of the soul from the carnal life, which subjects the spirit to God, and the body to the spirit, which is not satisfied with retrenching forbidden things, but cuts off even permitted pleasures, for the love of God, for the expiation of sins, and for the acquisition of greater graces. Hast thou indeed died this precious death? Alas! but too much perhaps art thou living to thyself.

SECOND PART.

Look upon mortification as the most extensive of all virtues in its practice, and the one which consequently demands the most attention; it embraces the interior and exterior of the Christian, his soul with all her powers, his body with all its senses; and for this cause mortification must be both continual and universal.

Continual, because occasions for self-mortification present themselves very often, so that after having mortified ourselves in one point, we feel the moment after that we must begin again and retrench anew, and that we fall if we be not upon our guard. This is the precaution that St. Bernard thought it needful to give his children, when he used to say to them: "Be incessantly attentive to self-mortification, and that too without relaxation" (St. Bern. Serm. xviii. in Cant.); for, believe me, my brethren, a pruned plant quickly shoots again, a repulsed enemy soon returns to the charge, an extinguished taper promptly relights when brought the least near the fire, and a slumbering passion speedily awakes.

It must be universal; it begins by the inner man, in the heart; it cuts off self-love, imperfect attach-

ments towards creatures, or even towards permitted pleasures, all antipathies, and all predilections : in the mind it corrects pride, vain self-esteem, contempt of others, curiosity, and all thoughts which are not directed towards God.

It extends itself over the outward senses : for the sight, the taste, the touch, the hearing, the smelling, convey corruption into the soul, if care be not taken to mortify them. It brings the body into subjection, and retrenches all self-indulgences. Here is a subject of strict examination ; after having made it, ask thyself if thou art so dead to thyself as to live to God Alone.

AFFECTIONS.

O how blessed should I be, O my God, if I could as truly as did the Royal Prophet (Ps. xlv. 22) say the words which the Great Apostle, animated with the same spirit, had confidence to repeat before Thee : "Lord, for Thy sake we are killed all the day long," through the practice of mortification, propter te mortificamur totâ die ; and "are accounted as sheep appointed to be slain." (Rom. viii. 36.)

But, alas ! I am too self-indulgent to be able so to speak ; such words would overwhelm me with shame : labour disheartens me, affliction casts me down ; I revolt against humiliation, mortification discourages me, I am disconcerted as soon as it is necessary to constrain myself in the fast : it appears as if in the midst of the religion of the Cross I were but a man of pleasure ; sensuality, self-indulgence, lukewarmness, sloth, are my whole inclination, and as yet I have reformed nothing, and retrenched nothing by mortification : I find nothing but self-love in my heart, dangerous recollections only in my memory, and curiosity, pride, and uselessness in my mind.

I bear about with me a flesh which rebels against this spirit, and a law of sin directly contrary to Thy

law, which is holy ; all my exterior senses lead me but to corruption. Ah, Lord ! arm me with a holy hatred against self ; arm me with that wholesome sword which, without self-sparing, may cut off and retrench all things which displease Thee in all the powers of my soul, and in all my exterior senses ; may this holy sword of mortification make me die to the world, to sin, and to self, that so I may live to Thee, in Thee, and for Thee, in time and in eternity

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE
FATHERS.

UPON FIDELITY.

Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through JESUS CHRIST our Lord. (Rom. vi. 11.)

If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Rom. viii. 13.)

Die to live, be buried to rise again. (S. Aug. de verb. Ap.)

Poverty of raiment, frugality of living, the severity of fasts, should extinguish and not nourish pride. (S. Pet. Reg. Mon.)

ELEVENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

THE OFFENDED GOD BECOME A SAVIOUR.

All sin, whatever may be its nature, is against God, offends His Infinite Majesty, and shocks His greatest Perfections ; it outrages His Goodness, for it almost always presumes upon His Divine Mercy ; it attacks His Justice, by the little fear it entertains of His chastisements ; it insults His authority, by the contempt it shows for His Divine precepts ; it offends His Immensity, by the little respect it evinces for His Adorable Presence.

Now so it is, that we never can offend with impunity the just, great, Almighty, perfect God, Whom we adore; the wrongs committed against Him by the sin of our first parent, and of all his descendants, demand reparation, both in order to atone for the wrong done to God, to remit its penalties, and to wash away its guilt; in a word, to redeem man from Hell, and to restore to him the right of aspiring to Heaven.

But who will be the Saviour? Man is weak, and by himself can do nothing, since to make compensation for an infinite injury, His merits, who should repair it, must be infinite. There was none, then, but God Alone, and this is that miracle of love which we adore in the Incarnation. God undertakes to make reparation to Himself, at His own cost, that He may save man; He maketh Himself his ransom, He taketh upon Him all man's sins, as if He Himself were guilty of them, and in this reconciliation, what would appear unworthy of His greatness, He beareth all the penalties which the sinner deserved, as if (which were impossible) He were Himself a sinner. He cometh down from Heaven, He taketh a mortal body, a fragile flesh, He suffereth in that flesh, He alloweth all that Blood to be shed which He had assumed in the Virgin's womb, and He dieth that most bitter and most shameful death, which the greatest criminals alone could merit to endure.

I was exiled from my Heavenly Home. O my Divine Saviour! Thou hast recalled me thither: I was sold; Thou hast ransomed me: I was blind; Thou hast given me light: I had incurred Thy wrath; Thou hast given me again Thy grace, Thou hast restored me Thy love, Thy Heart, Thy Kingdom: I had outraged Thee; Thou hast made reconciliation to Thyself for me, and all this at the price of Thy Blood. Thou Who wast the offended God, and Who

shouldest, therefore, have been the Avenging God, couldest Thou extend Thy love further than Thyself to become nevertheless God our Saviour?

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Deus virtutum, convertere; respice de cœlo et vide, et visita vineam istam quam plantavit dextera tua.

Turn Thee again, Thou God of Hosts, look down from Heaven; behold, and visit this vine; and the place of the vineyard that Thy Right Hand hath planted. (Ps. lxxx. 14, 15.)

The Second Thursday in Advent.

DAY OF PATIENCE.

PRACTICE.

If any occasion of suffering happens to-day, immediately call patience to thine assistance, and practise it, so long as the evil shall continue, without complaining, and without seeking to comfort thyself, except with God Alone: add to this a perfect conformity to His Will, go on even to giving Him thanks, and watch so attentively over thyself, that the smallest impatience may not escape thee, nor the least precipitation, either in thine actions, thy words, thy gestures, or even in thy thoughts.

MEDITATION UPON PATIENCE.

FROM THE EPISTLE FOR SUNDAY.

FIRST PART.

“Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience

and consolation of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. xv. 4.)

By what powerful motives does the great Apostle instil patience into the Christians of Rome? By the examples which are found of it in the Scriptures, by the consolation which she herself produces in the suffering soul, and by the hope of that eternal joy with which she is crowned in Heaven, as if this holy Apostle would have wished to say to them, Ye suffer, my brethren, but read the Scriptures; ye have them before your eyes; there will ye find instructions and examples which will bring you real consolation in your troubles, which will afterwards persuade you to suffer, not only with patience, but even with pleasure, according to the words of JESUS CHRIST Himself, Who exhorted His Apostles to suffer with joy, and even to be "exceeding glad," in the hope, and even the assurance which He gave them of a "great reward in Heaven."

Such is the instruction, such the consolation, such the recompense contained in the Apostle's words. Needs there any thing more in order to persuade thee to patience? follow his advice, open the Sacred Writings, think like the Prophet, who, after having reasoned at first, perhaps, too hardly upon a trying affliction, came afterwards to himself, and pronounced these excellent words (Ps. lxii. 5.): "Nevertheless, my soul, wait thou still upon God, for my hope is in Him," He only can give thee patience and comfort. But chiefly consider the Patience of God towards thee: thou hadst offended Him, and He had it in His Power to punish thee instantly, had He hearkened to His Justice only, which demanded that a thing of nought, rebelling and armed against his God, should be exterminated. Alas! where wouldest thou now be, if this God of Patience had not waited for thy repentance? How canst thou acknowledge

the Patience of God? By ever returning to Him without delay, and by repaying this Divine Patience by thine own, that is to say, by practising it in every suffering which He sends upon thee, and in those which thou receivest through the injustice of men.

SECOND PART.

"Now the God of Patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to CHRIST JESUS." (Rom. xv. 5.)

Look upon patience as the special virtue of God, Who, in order to inspire us with confidence in His goodness, has often taken the name of "the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Imitate Him in this Divine virtue; and, to do so with the more method and success, examine from whence the exercise of our patience ordinarily comes; first it comes from God, Who has an entire right over us, as being our sovereign Master and our Saviour. He exercises us, He punishes us, He tries us, He gives us up to grief, to humiliations, to contempt, to infirmities, to losses, to spiritual dryness; and this is ever for our good, because He loveth us: but how should we behave ourselves under all this? I will tell thee: Hearken to the Royal Prophet, he will give advice so much the wiser, because he draws it from his own conduct towards God, under the extreme sufferings to which He exposed him; behold his words, weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary. "Commit thy way unto the Lord," said this holy king in his affliction (Ps. xxxvii. 5. 7. 39); "trust also in Him; rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him, for of the Lord is strength in the time of trouble."

From time to time we suffer from men, who exercise our patience, sometimes by contempt, sometimes by calumnies, sometimes by various other outrages;

but if we suffer with patience, and in the spirit of that religion which is a religion of crosses and of sufferings, let us be persuaded that we have nothing to lose, every thing to gain. If thou placest a wrong in the hands of God, He (says Tertullian, in his admirable book upon patience¹) "is an Avenger; if a loss, He is a restorer; if pain, He is a physician; if death, He is the Resurrection. What a license hath Patience, in having God for her debtor!"

But in order to exercise patience in a high and Christian way, hear the description of her form and demeanour from that great writer²: "Patience hath a countenance serene and mild, a forehead smooth, contracted with no wrinkle of grief or of anger, her brows evenly and cheerfully relaxed, her eyes cast down in humility, not in melancholy. Her mouth beareth the seal of honourable silence." And let all these exterior marks spring from thy heart, for Christian patience consists, not so much in a composed exterior, as in a heart replete with love.

AFFECTIONS.

I adore, O Lord! with deep respect, Thy Divine Patience towards me; to Thy Patience do I return a thousand times ten thousand thanks, and I confess that to Her I owe my life, and that without Her I should have been lost without reprieve for time and for eternity. But, is it enough, O my God, to acknowledge Thee, with the Prophet (Ps. cxlv. 8), to be "gracious, slow to anger, and of great mercy," waiting for sinners instead of punishing them, because Thou wiltest to save them? No, with him must I add, that it is Thou Who workest patience in me; for, as he says, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. He only is

¹ De Pat. c. 15.

² Ib. c. 16.

my rock and my salvation : He is my defence, I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation, and my glory." *Quoniam ab ipso patientia mea.* (Ps. xxii. 5—7.)

But may I not go further even than this expression, and say to Thee, with the same Prophet, penetrated like him with loving gratitude : O Lord, Thou art not only a God of patience, Thou art not only the Author of my patience, when I am faithful enough to practise it in my afflictions ; but Thou art Thyself my patience, and consequently " my only hope ?" *Quoniam tu es patientia mea, Domine*³. Not only hast Thou waited graciously for me, without growing weary of my slowness, without being angry at my resistance, and without punishing at once my impatience and my revolts ; but Thou Thyself being my patience, Thou waitest still in me, and Thou upholdest my patience, which in one sense is Thine Own, lest my inconstancy and frivolity should make me fall into impatience, into heaviness, or into discouragement.

Uphold me ever, O my God and my sure Patience ; ever work patience in me ; raise me above all the ills which overwhelm me, and I shall ever be victorious, and Thou wilt crown Thine Own gifts by crowning the conqueror with eternal glory.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON PATIENCE.

Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. (Heb. x. 36.)

Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts ; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. (James v. 8.)

³ Ps. lxx. 5. See Guide for Lent, p. 352.

Patience makes us to be loved of God, it softens wrath, restrains the tongue, quiets the mind, guards peace, it maintains discipline, and represses lust. (St. Cypr. de bono pat. c. 14.)

Patience is victorious over all, not by fighting, but by suffering; it produces humility, it works penitence, it perfects martyrdom. (Cassiod. in Ps.)

TWELFTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

GREATNESS IN LOWLINESS.

Who is so great a God as our God? For Thou art the God that doest wonders, cries the Kingly Prophet. (Ps. lxxvii. 13, 14.) Who also adds, Yes, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, His glory is over all His creatures:" *Magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis.* (Ps. xlviii. 1, &c.) HE is great by the infinite excellence of His supreme and incomprehensible Being: HE is great by the wondrous extent of His authority and of His Almightyness without bounds; HE is great through His Adorable perfections, which are infinite and without measure. A greatness so exalted, and so all-complete, that it can receive neither increase nor diminution. In a word, so great, that It is the spring of all greatness; none being great but by Him Alone, and HE Alone being His Own greatness.

But this Greatness above all greatness, and which all the powers of Heaven, or earth, or hell, could not abase; this Greatness Which has cast forth by Its thunderbolts the greatest and most perfect of all spirits and of all beings which ever came forth from His Hands, because he desired to compare himself with Him, is nevertheless about to be abased by Himself and by His Own love, and to put Himself on a level with mankind, whom He loves, by espousing their nature with all the miseries to which it is exposed, except-

ing sin. This uncreated WORD, in all things equal to His Heavenly Father from Whom He proceeds, becomes, through the Incarnation, His Worshipper, His Subject, and His Victim; the Sovereign of all Angels, He becomes inferior to them through the espousing of our flesh: the Creator of men, He comes on earth to minister unto them, and to obey them, as if they were His masters. Go in spirit to the stable of Bethlehem; but thou must go with a faith deeply submissive and truly enlightened in one sense, that thou mayest adore all the greatness of God in the body of an Infant, Who has His littleness as His only heritage, Who is in the deepest poverty, Who is rejected of men, Who suffers, Who sheds tears, Who utters infant cries from His tiny Breast: in Him behold the Sovereign Lord of this earth's mighty monarchs, Who builds up and casts down thrones at His will. But behold this Great God Whom love hath abased to the humiliating state in which thou seest Him: wilt thou after this refuse, thou who art nothing, to humble thyself for the love of Him?

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Dic animæ meæ: Salus tua Ego sum.

Say unto my soul, I am thy Salvation. (Ps. xxxv. 3.)

The Second Friday in Advent.

DAY OF CHARITY.

PRACTICE.

To execute this important practice rightly, live in great circumspection with thy brethren; love them with their defects, both because God commands it, and because they are redeemed like thyself with the

Blood of JESUS CHRIST, and are inheritors of the same Kingdom : do nothing, say nothing, which can offend them : go further, love them, have them in thy heart, for the heart is indeed lord over the thoughts of the mind : but go still further, for in order to do nothing, to say nothing, to think nothing, and to feel nothing against thy neighbour, thou must draw from the love of CHRIST wherewith to bring forth, to sustain, to regulate, and to sanctify the love of man.

MEDITATION UPON CHARITY.

TAKEN FROM THE EPISTLE.

FIRST PART.

"God grant you to be likeminded one toward another, according to CHRIST JESUS : that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our LORD JESUS CHRIST." (Rom. xv. 5, 6.)

Behold a most profitable wish, and one which contains admirable instructions upon charity : let us carefully consider each word, and weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary.

"God grant you to be likeminded, &c."

Brotherly love comes, then, from God, it is a grace as well as a precept ; and we cannot love our brother as we are capable of loving him, unless we love him in a way above nature.

I know that the law of nature inspires and ordains it, and that this natural love is laudable ; I know that it is a fearful disorder, even in nature, to see men, who, destitute of the feelings of humanity towards each other, far from giving mutual succour in their reciprocal wants, seek but to harm, to decry, and to destroy each other ; and that such men are monsters whom nature herself abhors.

But this love, so long as it departs not from the order of nature, does nothing towards obtaining Hea-

ven, and is besides subject to a multitude of illusions, which concupiscence and self-love very often instil into it. Strive then to elevate thy charity from the lower rank of nature to the higher of grace.

"Be likeminded one toward another," continues the Apostle: by this expression he requires a charity alike constant in adversity as in prosperity, in disgrace as in favour, in sickness as in health, in riches as in poverty.

"Likeminded," that is to say, that by sacrificing every thing to charity, nothing may be able to cut off thy friendship, nor even to cool it: neither suspicions, nor reports, nor ill offices, nor little outbreaks, nor the inequalities of temper.

"According to the spirit of JESUS CHRIST." Here the Apostle excludes the spirit of the world, the spirit of ambition, the spirit of party, the spirit of jealousy, and the spirit of interest, which but too often come between, and separate brother from brother, more especially when united only by the blood of a common father, and not by the Blood of CHRIST.

"That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God." The Apostle here alludes to the charity of the Christians of his time, who all had but one heart and one soul, and by this union gave all the honour they could return to the love of JESUS CHRIST. Study this excellent example, and try to conform thy charity to it.

SECOND PART.

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as CHRIST also received us to the glory of God." (Rom. xv. 7.)

The great Apostle, after having given us these holy instructions upon brotherly love, concludes by setting before us its motives, rules, and example, which he draws from the union of JESUS' Heart with ours, through the most tender, the strongest,

and most perfect love. Thus JESUS CHRIST also calls this love His Commandment, "This is My Commandment." (John xv. 12.) He declares Himself more particularly the Author of this than of all the other precepts, as if He would say, according to St. Augustine, "if other laws proceed from His Lips, this of love is from His Heart." "Lex cordis."

This was its tenure; receive it reverently, and may it pass from the Heart of JESUS into thine. My Apostles, "ye are My Friends if ye do whatsoever I command you; this is My Commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you; if ye love Me, keep my Commandments." Examine thyself upon this particular, and see if thou art the "friend" of JESUS.

But if the Love of our Adorable Saviour is the rule of that which He wills us to bear towards our brethren, let us study this rule; it is sure, it is holy, it is infallible: let us follow this Divine example. JESUS CHRIST loved us, sinners as we were; He has given us His grace, which no man can deserve; He has instructed us in our ignorance; He has sought us in our wanderings; He has consoled us in our troubles; He has helped us in our wants, both corporeal and spiritual; He has never thrust us away when we have had recourse to Him; He has borne us on His Heart; He has given us all His most precious things; He has given Himself; He has suffered, He has died for the love of us: such is the rule, such the measure, such the motive, such the model of our love; copy it if thou wouldest have its reward, which is nothing less than an eternal kingdom.

AFFECTIONS.

Shed, O loving GOD! shed on my heart that true charity of which Thou art the Spring, of which Thou art the Centre and the End: O that I may abide in

this more than natural charity, since through it I shall abide in Thee, and Thou in me.

I ask Thee but for that love which grace produces in our souls, and which bears the image and the expression of that which Thou hast had for me and for all men, in giving all Thy Blood for our salvation; I desire, with the help of that grace which I ask of Thee, to love my brother, because he is the price of Thy Blood, as Thou lovest him, and for the same end for which Thou lovest him. I desire to love Thee first in Thine Own Self, because Thou Alone art supremely worthy of love. I desire to love Thee in myself, because Thou art even in me when I love Thee, and I desire to love my brother for the love of Thee, because Thou commandest me, and he is Thine image.

I know, said St. Bernard (St. Bern. in Cant.), that there is a natural love which proceeds from flesh and blood, that there is a moral love which merit draweth out; but there is a more than natural brotherly love which grace produces; that only, O Lord, do I entreat of Thee, by it will all the rest be sanctified.

Yes, said St. Augustine, I will love Thee in my friends, either because Thou art in them, or that Thou mayest be in them. Give me strength to accomplish this law of love: unite all our hearts with Thine; may I be able to draw from that sweet Centre all the motives of my love, that so I may be made worthy to love Thee, and to possess Thee in a blessed eternity.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

ON CHARITY.

By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John xiii. 35.)

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you. (John xiii. 34.)

We have here no need of long speaking, in order to establish the law ; thou wouldest receive, give ; thou wouldest have mercy, show it. (St. Chrys. in S. Matt.)

If the love of others beareth not the image of God, it is not perfect. (St. Aug. de Civ. Dei.)

THIRTEENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

A LOVING MAJESTY.

The sacred title of Majesty belongs, in truth, only to God, because of the excellency of His supreme Being and the plenitude of His Power, which stretcheth itself over Heaven and earth, not excepting the most mighty monarchs, to whom men nevertheless give the name of Majesty, because they are His brightest images, and have a precious participation of His Glory, His Greatness, and His Power. Oh, Majesty of God ! so transcendant that the weakness of man cannot support it ; and that Moses, from having, through a special favour, approached It upon the mountain, received from It a ray so vivid and so shining, that he was obliged to veil his face before he spoke to the Israelites, lest they should be, by the rays which emanated from it, dazzled.

The Prophet sung the praises of this Majesty of God, when he said : " Blessed be the Name of His Majesty for ever : and all the earth shall be filled with His Majesty. Amen. Amen." (Ps. lxxii. 19.)

But how astounding the miracle of God's graciousness to men ! This resplendent Majesty lays aside His glory in taking our flesh ; and in the first moment of the Incarnation, for fear of overwhelming Mary with the splendour of the Power and Majesty of the Word, the HOLY GHOST, Who wrought this Divine operation, covered it with a mysterious veil, and a kindly over-

shadowing, in order to conceal the Majesty of God even from her, who was becoming His Mother: a Majesty which He resumed, during His mortal life, but for one single moment upon Mount Tabor, and there it was overwhelming to three great Apostles, who were thrown to the ground by its exceeding brightness, although that was but a softened glory and a tempered majesty, which He shall resume again in the Day of His terrible Judgment, when it will form the joy of the elect and the terror of the condemned.

This bright Majesty of God hid Itself, that He might converse familiarly with the men whom He willed to save. We have now, then, more cause than Moses had to say: "What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call unto Him for?"

Go to the manger, thou wilt find a Child watchfully hiding all His Majesty, lest it should shine forth upon His Brow; receiving simple shepherds to visit Him with as much favour and kindness as though they were monarchs. Follow Him in His preaching, thou wilt find Him graciously calling sinners, and eating with them, despite the murmurs of the Jews. Go to the house of Simon, there wilt thou find a sinner at His Feet, kissing them, washing them with her tears, and wiping them with her hair. Follow Him in His Passion, thou wilt find Him ever ready to hear those who come unto Him, ever suffering, ever loving, and ever ready to give thee all His Blood! Respond to His love by thy very tenderest.

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Intende animæ meæ, et libera eam: propter inimicos meos eripe me.

Draw nigh unto my soul, and save it: O deliver me, because of mine enemies. (Ps. lxix. 19.)

The Second Saturday in Advent.

DAY OF HOPE.

PRACTICE.

LET the first thought, the first feeling, the first act, and the first word which succeeds thy waking, be drawn from the depth of thy hope of heavenly joys, founded upon the never-failing promises of God. That this may be so, say unto God with thy heart rather than thy lips, these words of the Prophet: "In Thee, O Lord, have I trusted, let me never be confounded." In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in æternum. Banish this day all servile fear, and wholly give thyself up to that holy joy which the hope of celestial joys produces in the heart: Spe gaudentes, "rejoicing in hope," as the Apostle says.

MEDITATION UPON HOPE.

TAKEN FROM THE EPISTLE.

FIRST PART.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. xv. 4.)

Hope, which the Church numbers among the theological virtues, must needs be of the greatest importance to the salvation of a Christian, and also must tend greatly to God's glory, since, according to this sentence of the great Apostle, it appears that Holy Scripture hath been written but to beget and strengthen this hope, and to prove the fidelity of God in His promises, which are the base, the support, the allurement, and the very substance, thus to speak, of that

great virtue which forms our whole consolation during this mortal life.

Yes, God has promised us in the Scriptures eternal bliss, and He has been graciously pleased to make a solemn covenant with us : He has willed that we should put on our part faith, the love of Him, hatred of the world, and the practice of good works ; Himself promising to give His grace, to make the doing this more easy ; He puts as His Part in this Covenant an eternal kingdom ; and to make it more sure and certain, He does two things ; first, He promises, and then He even swears to execute it, in order to facilitate our hope, and to give, by His Divine Oaths, both authority and proof to His Promises. What saith Tertullian ? God interposeth a Divine oath : a God infinitely true, because the Truth Itself ; doth He swear for our sakes ? How greatly does this Oath honour us ! and how wretched were we, did we not trust a God Who promises, and confirms this promise by an oath.

Secondly, to make this covenant more sure, He signs it with His most precious Blood : is not my hope then amply established ? Oh ! can I, as a Christian, says St. Fulgentius, or even as a man of reason, doubt the truth and the authenticity of God's promises ? Two great reasons prevent my doing so, and form my whole security and consolation in hoping. First, because He is true, and He supremely loves that Truth which He Himself is. Secondly, because Truth costs Him nothing, and through keeping His promises He is not a whit more poor, however great and glorious they may be, for He is infinitely rich, and His treasures inexhaustible. What a consolation for thee ! Think of it, reckon on the promises of God, hope every thing ; but take heed to nourish thy hope by good works.

SECOND PART.

Hope then for that thou seest not yet, concludes St. Augustine (S. Aug. in Joan. c. 5): faith in things not seen will give worth to thy hope, and hope will be the support of thy faith. Wait with patience for that thou hast not yet, and be sure that thou wilt have it without fail, because **JESUS CHRIST**, Who is a faithful **GOD**, has promised it thee; because this same **JESUS**, Who has promised it thee, is **Almighty GOD**, Who can give thee all He hath promised thee, and is most faithful in His promises; and above all these urgent reasons, because thou hast this **JESUS** wholly, Who hath promised; He has given Himself to thee Body, Soul, and Divinity, as a pledge of that which He hath promised thee; thus thou mayest, with deep reverence, daily sum up before Him the promises which He hath made thee, and thou mayest be sure that this thy claim will not be displeasing to Him, though He be **GOD**.

It is commonly said in the world, and it is said with truth, that "we live upon hope;" and in religion it is said much more truly, with respect to eternal treasures, than it is with regard to those of time; all the consolation, all the repose, all the joy, all "the life of this mortal life," says St. Augustine, "is in the hope of the life immortal:" *Vita vitæ mortalis, spes est vitæ immortalis.* (S. Aug. in Ps. ciii. Serm. iv. § 17.)

If Sorrow comes upon thee, and thou fearest to sink under it, because thou feelest thy weakness, of which thou hast but too many sorrowful experiences, have recourse to hope, meditate upon the promises of **GOD**, which thou wilt not do without finding consolation; say, with the Prophet, "It is good for me to hold me fast by **GOD**," since all creatures forsake me, and "to put my trust in the **LORD GOD**," for He is

all my hope (Ps. lxxiii. 27): "though an host of men were laid against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid; and though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Him." (Ps. xxvii. 3.) I may even add, without presumption, with the holy Job, "though the Almighty God slay me, yet will I trust in Him." (Job xiii. 15.)

AFFECTIONS.

As for me, O Lord, exclaims the Prophet (see Ps. iv. 8), I will lay me down in peace, if I do but love Thee with my whole heart; I shall be in peace day and night, for Thou hast strengthened me in hope in a way altogether wondrous: Thou hast given the evidence of this to my mind through the help Thou hast vouchsafed me in all my needs; Thou hast caused me to feel it in my heart; Thou hast confirmed me in it by Thy Words, which are the oracles of eternal truth, and by Thy Divine promises; Thou Who art a Faithful God, yea, Faithfulness itself, and Who canst do all, because Thou art God Almighty; Thou hast strengthened me still more wonderfully in my hope, by Thy Cares, by Thy Labours, by Thy Sufferings, by Thy Passion, by Thy Blood, and by Thy Death, Which are of infinite worth, and Which form the Divine treasure with Which Thou hast purchased for us that blessed "mansion" to which we aspire, and which Thou dost promise us.

After such assurances, I should be miserable and blind indeed did I not put all my hope in Thee: yes, O my God, said the kingly Prophet, our fathers have traced the path which I will follow; "they hoped in Thee, and were not confounded; they called upon Thee, and were holpen." (Ps. xxii. 4, &c.) "Though I am a worm, and no man, but rather the scorn of men," yet Thou shalt be my only hope: "Thou wast my hope when I hanged yet upon my mother's

breasts," and Thou shalt be so, so long as I live. Woe is me if I forget this my bounden duty, which is all my joy and all my delight. "I have cried unto Thee, O Lord," and I will ever cry with this holy king, saying unto Thee, "Thou art my refuge and my hope" in this life, "and my portion in the land of the living." (Ps. cxlii. 6.)

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON HOPE.

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. (Jer. xvii. 7.)

Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD. (Ps. xxxi. 24.)

Have a well-fixed hope in the Heavenly joys thou seest not ; wait for them with patience, though thou possessest them not, since thou hast that same JESUS CHRIST abiding in thee, Who promised them to thee. (S. Aug. in S. Joan.)

GOD inviteth us by a reward, salvation ; swearing also "As I live." He desireth that we should believe Him. O happy we for whose sake God sweareth ! O most miserable, if we believe not the Lord, even when He sweareth. (Tert. de pœnit. c. iv.)

FOURTEENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

IMMENSITY ENCLOSED.

The Immensity of GOD, by which He fills all things and is in all things, is one of the most glorious Properties of His Supreme Being, and one of the most glorious attributes of His Divinity ; the vast expanse of earth, of sea, of heaven, can neither contain nor enclose Him, nor put any bounds to His Immensity. A truth so immoveable, that it was even known by the philosophers whom St. Paul was willing to quote,

before those learned Areopagites who might have contradicted him, had they not themselves learnt it; "for in Him," says that great Apostle, "we live, and move, and have our being." He is within all things without being enclosed in them; He is above and around all things without being excluded from them, because His Being is an indivisible Whole, and a Whole universally spread abroad without being composed of parts.

It is then through the infinite love which the Word of God bears towards men, that He has been pleased to put bounds to His Immensity, through the mystery of the Incarnation, and that this "contracted Word¹," as the holy fathers call Him, allows a Body to be formed for Himself from the pure blood of a Virgin, wherein He finds the secret of wholly enclosing His Divinity; for what is more little than the but-just formed body of a child, and yet It contains That wholly which Heaven and earth cannot contain? Let us here extend our reflections still further, and reflect, with deep attention, that in this little Infant Body resides a Mind, and in this Mind there is a mine of science and of wisdom, and all the brightest and most piercing light of the Divinity, which are there shut up and eclipsed in such wise, that nought thereof

¹ From Is. x. 22. *Verbum breviatum*. See St. Cypr. Test. ii. p. 40. Oxf. Tr. and, in part, Vigil. Taps. c. Varimad. B. P. v. 736; mostly it is explained of the condensation of duty or doctrine or prayer by our Lord, Who is the Word, into a "Divine brevity," as opposed to the burthensomeness of the law. St. Cypr. de Orat. Dom. c. xviii. p. 193. Oxf. Tr.; St. Aug. de disc. Chr. c. 2; De Quæstt. ad Simpl. i. 19; St. Ambr. de Tob. c. xx. § 79; Gaud. Tr. 15, de Macc. B. P. v. 967; Chromat. in St. Matt. c. v. ib. p. 987; Vigil. Taps. l. c. From the last writer it appears that a blasphemous argument was founded upon it, as though it related not to the Human, but the Divine Nature of our Lord, and so was brought to prove the inferiority of the Son, as God. [Ed.]

may outwardly appear. Let us go still further, and let us reflect, that in that little body, limited on all sides, is also found a Heart, and that that Heart, so soon as formed, has become the chief seat of Divine love, with all its Divine Fire, capable of enkindling all other hearts, and that it is obliged to restrain all those manifestations by which it might burst forth.

This little Body, formed by the Hand of the HOLY GHOST, wherein dwells all the fulness of the Divinity, is as yet still enclosed in the Virgin's womb, and will be there during nine months, without occupying a larger space, despite His unbounded Greatness. O, wondrous prodigy ! which caused one¹ to exclaim : "Sacred womb of Mary, thou art more vast than Heaven, thou art of more wondrous comprehension than the universe, since Thou enclosest Him Who encloseth all, and the King of Glory reposeth in thee."

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Domine, miserere nobis ; te enim expectavimus, esto brachium nostrum in mane, et salus nostra in die tribulationis.

O Lord, be gracious unto us ; we have waited for Thee : be Thou our Arm every morning, our Salvation also in the time of trouble. (Isa. xxxiii. 2.)

¹ This is quoted as if from Serm. ii. de Nativ., now App. 234, as not being St. Augustine's. The only words are : "He Who was in the beginning, includes in Himself every beginning [principle]. But He took a beginning [initium] of His mother." Yet the thought might, of course, well have been St. Augustine's. [ED.]

The Third Sunday in Advent.

DAY OF HUMILITY.

PRACTICE.

BEGIN the day by adoring the Supreme Greatness of God : adore Him first upon His celestial throne, surrounded by all His Seraphim : and then go to the manger to adore, with the Angels, that same Greatness humbled for thy sake : make an act of the deepest humiliation before that Supreme Majesty ; acknowledge that thou art but an earth-worm, a living nothing, a quickened clay, and a sinner who has deserved hell : act as becomes this acknowledgment during the day ; let no occasion of humiliating thyself escape, and pardon not in thyself the smallest act of pride or vanity in thy thoughts or thy feelings, in thy words or thy looks, in thy gestures or in thine actions.

MEDITATION UPON HUMILITY.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

“ I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the LORD.” (Jobn i. 23.)

This is the admirable reply which the great Forerunner made to those Pharisees who were sent by the Jews of Jerusalem, that they might ask him the reason of his mission, of his preaching, and of his baptism. The wonderful conversions which he was working, caused him to be taken either for the Messiah, or for Elias, or for a Prophet ; the pitiless war which he was waging against luxury and a sensual life, as much, nay, more, by his example than by his words, was working powerfully on the minds of men. This

Divinely-inspired preacher (whose words were sustained by a life which was fearful to self-indulgence) was gaining all hearts, that he might turn them to God, and make them embrace the most rigorous penances, he elevated his sublime greatness still further by the deepest humility : he answered the Pharisees that he was neither the Messiah Who was to come, nor Elias, nor a Prophet ; but that he was only " the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord.'"

What wonderful humility, and how glorious when united to true greatness, such as St. John the Baptist possessed, according to the testimony of CHRIST Himself. He says that he is but a mere voice. What is the voice ? It is but a sound articulated by the mouth, which is lost in the air as soon as formed ; could any one estimate himself lower ?

He was indeed literally following the counsel of the Wise Man, who said : " The greater thou art, the more humble thyself, and thou shalt find favour before the LORD," for all greatness compared with His is nothing ; " the power of the LORD is great, and He is honoured of the lowly." (Ecclus. iii. 18. 20.) Study deeply this beautiful passage ; it is well worthy thy reflections ; make it the rule of thy conduct ; begin by profoundly humbling thyself in the Presence of this God of Majesty ; acknowledge His Greatness and thy nothingness ; pass no day without this laudable practice, it will draw down upon thee His grace and His protection, and thou wilt gather motives from it for humbling thyself before men, and for being ever little in thine own eyes.

SECOND PART.

" He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for He was before me, Whose shoe's latchet I am unworthy to unloose." (John i. 15. 27.)

Here remark that the deep humility of St. John the Baptist continues unto the end, by the lowly feelings he expresses of himself, and with which he sincerely desires to inspire those who are sent to him. Thus, not content with having said that he was but a mere "voice," he goes beyond this humble expression, by abasing himself even to the ground, by calling himself unworthy to unloose the shoes of Him Who should come after him.

This is the excellent example which the Church puts before us to-day, in order to prepare us for receiving our God and Saviour humbled in the manger, Who has willed to hide all His Glories, in order to cure our pride, and to save us through humility. Verily that Heaven, which He hath promised us, and which He hath gained for us by His sufferings and by His wondrous Abasement, is very high, says St. Augustine, but the way which leads thither is very low. Thy home is the Life of CHRIST, the way the Death of CHRIST; thy home the mansion of CHRIST, the way the Passion of CHRIST. Who refuseth the way, why seeketh he the home? *Qui recusat viam, quid quærit patriam?* (S. Aug. in S. Joan. Tr. xxviii. § 5.)

Ask thyself what progress thou hast made in humility. It ought to be in the mind, formed by truth, and in the heart, formed by love, says St. Bernard. Is thy mind persuaded that thou art nothing? In order to persuade thee of this, ask thyself again and again what thou hast been, what thou art, and what thou wilt be. (S. Bern. Sermon. ii. in Cant.)

What wast thou before thou wast in being? A pure nothing, and less than a worm. What wast thou in thy creation? Dust of the earth, clay, and an assemblage of all uncleanness. What wast thou in thy birth? An enemy of God, without grace or reason. What art thou now? A frail sinner, and

if without grace, capable of the most shameful weaknesses. But what wilt thou be? The food of worms, rottenness, dust and ashes: and assuredly the prey of eternal flames, if thou art not lowly in mind, and humble in heart, loving thy humbled state, through obedience to JESUS CHRIST, Who humbled Himself for the love of thee.

AFFECTIONS.

How admirable and excellent an example of humility dost Thou set before me to-day, O my Saviour! Thine Adorable Mouth, Which hath never pronounced other than the words of truth, gave the most exalted praise to John the Baptist, when It said, "that among those who are born of women, there is not a greater than he;" nevertheless, this holy Forerunner saith of himself, that he is but a simple "voice," and that Thy "shoe latchet" he is "not worthy to unloose." Ah! so pure, so eminent a greatness, joined to so deep a humility, form a blessed company of virtues worthy of Thine Esteem and of Thy Praise: but at the same time it overwhelms me with shame; for too well I feel that I am destitute of humility, and this it is which makes me with reason fear lest I should be destitute of those graces, and deprived of the eternal recompence which Thou grantest to those only who are humble of heart.

To this example of humility, perfect as it is, Thou addest another yet infinitely more forcible, even Thyself; Thou preparest me by the example of the humble Baptist to repair to visit Thee in the stable, in order to adore Thee there, the humble JESUS CHRIST, upon a poor cradle; an Almighty God, the Creator of Angels and of men, the Sovereign of Heaven and of earth, humbled to the condition of flesh. What can more strongly repress the rebellions of my mind, cure my pride and my vanity, I, who am but a

vile creature, wholly full of miseries, of weaknesses, of corruption and of sins? Ah! well do I now comprehend, with the great Augustine³, that it is an insufferable presumption for a worm to desire to exalt himself, and to swell himself with pride, when he sees the God of Majesty thus reduce Himself by humility.

Oh! wondrous humility of my God; a deserted stable, mean swaddling-clothes, incommodious manger, lowly birth, teach me to humble myself: Adorable Jesus, Divinity hid in flesh like mine, gracious Saviour, instruct me, bring down my mind, reform my heart, cure my pride, give me humility, and with it Thy grace, Thy love, and Thy glory.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE
FATHERS.

ON HUMILITY.

JESUS humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him. (Phil. ii. 8, 9.)

Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (Matt. xi. 29.)

Oh! blessed humility, which hath given us God, hath given life to men, hath reserved us for Heaven, hath purified the world, hath opened Paradise, and freed the souls of men from hell. (Auct. incert. App. S. Aug. Sermon. 208. § 10.)

A humble heart is the dwelling of the HOLY GHOST. He dwelleth there, He filleth it, He goeth not forth. (S. Aug. in S. Joan.)

³ For this is quoted S. Aug. Sermon. i. de Nat. Dei [Nativ. Dom.] The words are not there; the contrast is very frequent throughout St. Aug. e.g. Sermon. cxvii. § 17. "Wouldest thou comprehend the height of God? first comprehend the lowliness of God. Vouchsafe to be humble for thy own sake, since God vouchsafed to be humble for the sake of thy same self; for it was not for Himself's sake."

FIFTEENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

THE KING, A SERVANT.

The Great God Whom we adore is King from everlasting, and He "sitteth King for ever," says the Prophet (Ps. xxix. 10); *Sedebit Rex in æternum*. His Sovereignty is so much the more sacred, as being joined to His Divinity: Thou art "my King and my God," said he again (Ps. v. 2); *Rex meus et Deus meus*. He is the "KING of kings and LORD of lords," and therefore the King of the whole earth. (Rev. xix. 16.) He too it is "Who calleth the earth from the rising of the sun," "the mighty God," "a great God and a great King above all gods." (Ps. l. 1; xciv. 3.) When this Almighty God speaketh of the kings of the earth, He treats them as His servants: and they indeed should count it an honour so to be, since they depend on Him, as this KING of glory truly showeth them when He wills, since with Him it is one to raise a shepherd from his hut, to put the crown upon his head, to place him on the throne, and to change his crook into a sceptre, or to overthrow the firmest thrones, to break the sceptres and the crowns of earthly kings, and to reduce them to the most lowly condition.

But this King of Heaven and of earth hath "been made perfect through suffering," endured, as it were, reverses; He hath allowed Himself to be overcome through the love of man; and from Sovereign, He hath become a servant, by making Himself man: for as He hath taken upon Himself all our sins, it was needful that He should bear their punishment, which is slavery.

Scarcely, then, is He come on earth, than He is obliged to fly in order to escape from the fury of an ambitious king, whom He Himself could have cast down from his throne and plunged into Hell.

He wills yet more, to fulfil all the duties of a servant in the house of His Parents, although He was their God and their King; and as soon as He shall appear publicly, He will declare that He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." (Matt. xx. 28.)

We shall see Him, as His Death approaches, finish as He began, by servitude, abasing Himself humbly at the feet of His Apostles to wash them, and thus fulfilling the most humiliating offices of a servant: He will die even by the shameful punishment of slaves: nevertheless, so soon as He shall be upon the Cross, He will resume the functions of a King: His enemies themselves will give Him that sacred title, which they will carefully write above His Head; He will convert a thief, He will give him a kingdom, He will reign by the Cross, and thus will He draw His glory from the bosom of opprobrium and of infamy.

Other kings, says a holy Doctor, assemble soldiers in order to expose them to death; our "KING of Glory" assembles soldiers under His sacred standard, in order to give them life, and to make them kings. (Hugo. Card. in Genes. c. 2.) To serve such a King, is it not to reign?

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Miserere nostri, Deus omnium, et respice nos, et ostende nobis lucem miserationum tuarum. (Eccl. xxxvi. 1. Vulg.)

Have mercy upon us, O LORD God of all, and behold us, and show us the light of Thy mercies.

The Third Monday in Advent.

DAY OF GOD'S PRESENCE.

PRACTICE.

ENTER, as soon as thou awakest, upon the practice of the Presence of God, and employ every means not to withdraw from It until thou must again take thy rest; if thou art faithful in this, thou wilt then be able to say with the Spouse in the Canticles: "I sleep, but my heart waketh." (Song of Sol. v. 2.)

Avoid all dissipating actions, and society in which they speak not of God, for in such one remembers not that God is present; re-enter that Divine Presence as often and as soon as thou perceivest that thou hast come forth from It; and in re-entering It, repeat some loving aspiration to that God Who looks upon thee, and Who hearkens to thee, which may engage Him never to withdraw from thee, such as those words of the Prophet: "O God, be not far from me:" *DEUS, ne elongeris à me.* (Ps. lxxi. 12.)

MEDITATION UPON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

"There standeth One among you, Whom ye know not." (John i. 26.)

It was of JESUS CHRIST that John the Baptist spake to the Pharisees, and he spake to them in this "dark saying," because the Adorable Saviour was still hidden in the bosom of His family, and had not as yet "shown Himself publicly," either by His preaching or His miracles. Thus the Pharisees were excusable in not knowing Him; but they will not be so long, for scarcely will they know Him, when, far from hearkening unto Him, they will persecute Him.

We have this same JESUS in the midst of us, and if we know Him not, it is our fault ; His Sacred Humanity is our joy ; His Divinity our possession ; in His Sanctuary we may daily find Him⁴ ; where two or three are in His Name, He is in the midst of us ; yea, He " comes " to us, and dwelleth in us through the Holy Communion : He toucheth our tongue⁵ as we receive Him ; He entereth our very bodies ; He is near our heart, He " dwelleth in our heart," and by His graces He maketh His Presence to be felt.

His Divinity, Which is inseparable from Himself, and Which filleth Heaven and earth, is " in " us, (John xiv. 20.) and we are penetrated therewith, even as a sponge cast into a vast sea : this Great God, Who is in all places, is above⁶ us to protect us ; He is around us and in the air which we breathe, to guard us and to prevent our wants ; He is beneath us, to sustain us and to uphold us ; He is within us, and more in us than are we ourselves, to nourish us, to preserve us, and to show us tokens of His love. Nevertheless, we know Him not as we ought to know Him, because we think not of Him, and because we have Him present neither to our memory, nor our mind, nor our heart, whilst the remembrance of Him, the thought of Him, and the love of Him, ought to form the delight of these three faculties of our soul.

With the least attention, reason itself teaches us what the Apostle Saint Paul said to the Areopagites (Acts xvii. 28.), and which they had already learnt from their Philosophers, that " in Him we live, and

⁴ Altered. [Ed.]

⁵ See St. Cyprian, Ep. 58. § 10. and note u. Oxf. Tr., and others in Bingham, Antiq. xv. 5, 6, and in our own Church, Hooker and Bp. Wilson, quoted in "The Holy Eucharist, a Comfort to the Penitent," p. 23, n. l. and App. pp. 39 and 85.

⁶ See Bp. Andrewes' Devotions, fourth day, fin.

move, and have our being." Faith comes to the aid of reason, and teaches us that it is a duty essential to man, above all to the Christian man, to think often of that God, Who is ever present. Doest thou this?

SECOND PART.

We here understand by the Presence of God, a frequent recollection, an attention, at least an habitual tendency, a desire for God, a loving and reverential looking of the mind and of the heart towards Him, an intimate language, a familiar speaking with, an universal dependence upon Him; an opening of the heart, in order to consult Him in all things, to hearken unto Him, to act beneath His Eye, and to turn ourselves away from the busy language of creatures and of our own passions, which might distract that attention which we owe to Him.

I well know that God sees me; and others carefully recall this truth to my remembrance lest I should forget it; I find again and again the word, "God seeth thee;" I see it written even upon the walls: am I struck with the thought as I ought to be? Alas! I accustom myself to say it without thinking of it, and without bestowing upon it the least attention. What ought I then to think, when by chance mine eyes fall upon it, or when I recollect it? That the Eyes of my God, of my Judge, are fixed upon me at every instant of my life; that those piercing Eyes, from which nought escapes, survey not only all my outward actions, but also the most hidden thoughts of my mind and the most secret motions of my heart. I ought also to think, that I subsist only, and that I am upheld only by this Look of God; and that if (which is impossible) He should cease to look upon me, I should instantly perish, and sink into that fearful abyss of nothingness from whence I came out.

But what more ought I also to infer from this?

Why, truly, that I should say to myself, Ah! if my God and my Creator, before Whom I am nothing, incessantly casts His Divine Thoughts and Eye on me, vile creature as I am, ought I not to esteem it a duty, an honour, nay, even a pleasure, incessantly to raise mine eyes, my mind, and my heart towards Him?

AFFECTIONS.

Where is my God? exclaimed the devout St. Bernard; but what do I say, miserable man that I am? Why do I not rather say, Where is He not? (S. Bern. de Cohær.) He is infinitely higher than heaven, deeper than hell, greater than the sea, wider than earth and than all this vast universe.

But, nevertheless, O incomprehensible Divinity! "O most High and unapproachable Light," said St. Anselm, "O full and blessed Truth, how far art Thou from me, who yet am so near to Thee! How far removed art Thou from my sight, who yet am present to Thy sight! Everywhere art Thou wholly present, and I see Thee not! In Thee I move, in Thee I am; yet to Thee I cannot draw nigh. Within me art Thou and around me; and I feel Thee not!" (S. Anselm. Proslog. c. 16.)

Ah! dear Lord, my condition would be still more sad, still more lamentable, if, in the midst of my impotency, either to see Thee or to approach Thee sensibly, I could not obtain Thy Divine Presence, by faith, by thought, by remembrance, by my desires, and by my love. But I can do this, and it is the sole consolation which remains to me in my exile, whilst waiting until I may see Thee face to face in Heaven, as I hope to do, because Thou hast promised it me.

In order to attain thither, I will follow the counsel of Thy Prophet, and in entire confidence will I say to Thee with that saintly King: "Mine eyes look unto Thee, O LORD GOD: in Thee is my trust, O cast

not out my soul. Keep me from the snare that they have laid for me, from the traps of the wicked doers." (Ps. cxli. 9, 10). They shall be fixed on Thee, that so I may do nothing which may be unworthy Thy sight: they shall be fixed on Thy Adorable Hands, "as the eyes of a servant unto the hand of his master," until Thou hast pity on me, and sheddest upon me the blessings of Thy grace and of Thy mercy. This alone I entreat: grant this to me, O Lord. (Ps. cxxiii.)

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

I am the ALMIGHTY GOD; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. (Gen. xvii. 1.)

In all thy ways acknowledge God, and He shall direct thy paths. (Prov. iii. 6.)

As there can be no moment in which we are not experiencing the Goodness and Mercy of God, so is it just that no moment should pass in which we think not of God. (De Spirit. et an. c. 35. ap. S. Aug.)

God is everywhere present in His Divinity, but He is not everywhere by the presence of His grace. (Id. Ibid.)

SIXTEENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

THE IMMORTAL SUBJECT TO DEATH.

God is Immortal, and His Immortality is His glory; as this Supreme Being hath had no beginning, so can He have no end. He is immortal by His Divine Nature, as being a perfect unity, that is to say, without composition of parts tending to corruption; for if death be, properly speaking, the separation of the body

and the soul, God having neither, He cannot consequently die.

Let us add, with the great Apostle, that "He only hath immortality;" *solus habet immortalitatem* (1 Tim. vi. 16); and that He is the spring and principle of the immortality, both of Angels and of our souls. Let us conclude with the same Apostle, by this exclamation and this homage to His Immortality: "Unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Tim. i. 17.)

But, O my God, how strange a fall didst Thou undergo in the mystery of the Incarnation! But can God fall? Yes, in one sense, He can: His love for man can alone abase the Supreme Being, can disarm the Almighty, can wound the Eternal, can cause the Immortal God to die.

The Oneness of His Divine nature, His immutability, His impeccability, which are the principles of His immortality, are here about to disappear, and He sacrificeth all the glory of them in becoming man. His Oneness suffereth because He taketh a nature composed of body and of soul, of flesh and of blood; and in espousing these, He espouseth also the seeds of death. His immutability suffereth, because He is about to endure all the changes to which man is subject; heat, cold, hunger, thirst, weariness, joy, sorrow, fear, grief, and, above all, death, which is the change which humbleth man beyond all others. His impeccability suffereth, because He is about to take upon Himself the sins of all men, to take all the appearances, to endure all the ignominies, and even the death of a sinner; death, which is so much the more full of shame, as being the punishment and wages of sin, even as by sin alone has it been brought into the world. He is about to be born, and to be born mortal, for the birth of man has death for its

destination ; he beginneth to hasten to his grave as soon as he is formed. Behold the sad heritage of an immortal God !

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

In multitudine misericordiæ tuæ exaudi me ; in veritate salutis tuæ.

Hear me, O God, in the multitude of Thy mercy, even in the truth of Thy Salvation. (Ps. lxix. 14.)

The Third Tuesday in Advent.

DAY OF PRAYER.

PRACTICE.

THY sole practice to-day will be "always to pray," following the counsel of Jesus. (Luke xviii. 1.) Be not affrighted, we do not here impose too hard a yoke upon thee ; the memory prays when God is recollected ; the mind prays when He is thought of ; the heart prays when He is loved ; the mouth prays when He is spoken to ; the hands pray when all actions are directed towards Him, and are done as in His Divine Presence. Begin, upon waking, the prayer of the mouth, and let that of the mind and heart accompany it ; act so that in the course of the day thou mayest pray with thy whole self.

MEDITATION UPON PRAYER.

TAKEN FROM THE EPISTLE.

FIRST PART.

"In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. iv. 6.)

Seriously reflect upon this beautiful sentence of the great Apostle, and thou wilt find admirable directions in it, which will teach thee both the necessity of prayer, and also of praying always. Indeed, he begins by these remarkable words : " In every thing," that is to say, we can and we ought to pray in all circumstances, in all places, whilst attending to the different affairs of life, in health, in sickness, in journeying, in every situation, if not with the mouth, at least with the mind and heart ; and this is what is called " having the spirit of prayer," which we cannot acquire but by dint of prayer, of earnest and frequent prayer ; and this spirit of prayer brings with it a desire, a readiness, a tendency, a disposition of the heart to pray always, and to do so with delight and fervour. If thou hast not this prayerful spirit, ask it of God ; strive to acquire it by diligence in prayer ; if thou hast it, cultivate it, perfect it daily, if thou wouldest be perfect. " By prayer and supplication let your requests," continues the great Apostle, " be made known unto God ;" he here recalls to our recollection that it is to our God we pray, to God our Creator, to God our Saviour, and to God our Judge. God our Creator wills that we should pray unto Him with deep reverence, for we are nought and He is All, and the very Angels themselves, infinitely above us as they are, tremble with awe in His Divine Presence. That Saving God, Who became man and suffered death for our sakes, wills that we should pray unto Him with love and gratitude also, for to Him we owe all, and all our hope is in Him. Finally, that God, Who is our Judge, wills that we should pray unto Him with fear and trembling, that we may find grace with Him in the fearful Day of Judgment.

St. Paul enjoins also " supplication" with " prayers," that is, urgent, reiterated, fervent prayers, without being discouraged, if not heard at first. Faithfully

follow these directions of the great Apostle, and thou wilt obtain all things from God.

SECOND PART.

Reflect upon thy extreme poverty, it will teach thee an excellent lesson upon prayer : be just to thyself, acknowledge it, feel it ; this thought will mortify thee at first, but it will persuade thee of the necessity of prayer, and of earnest prayer, if thou wouldest be brought out of thy wretchedness.

That we possess nothing, and that we can do nothing, for that we are nothing, nay, that we cannot aid ourselves in our greatest necessity, is a thought which leads us, even naturally, to have recourse to some one, who may be powerful enough to succour us, rich enough to pour himself forth in our behalf, and good enough to compassionate our distress. Faith and religion teach us that that One is God Alone, and by prayer only can we address ourselves to Him ; we cannot then do without prayer, since we cannot do without God.

If I be in spiritual darkness, and pray, I shall be enlightened both in the knowledge of God and of myself. " O Lord ! " says the Prophet, " in what time I call upon Thee, I know Thou God art for me." (Ps. lvi. 9.) If I be overwhelmed with temporal and spiritual miseries, if mine enemies persecute me, if my conscience, perplexed and laden with sins, crieth out against me, and I have but too much cause to fear an awful future, O let me pray, let me pray always, pray earnestly and perseveringly, for prayer is the never-failing remedy against all these miseries : an easy resource which may be found in whatever place and in whatever situation I may be, as the Apostle says, since (to my great consolation) God is every where, and He hearkeneth unto me ; and He can everywhere propitiously hear my requests,

as heretofore He hearkened unto those who called upon Him in their greatest need.

Daniel prayed in the lions' den ; Joseph in prison ; the three children in the furnace of Babylon ; Hezekiah on his bed ; Jonah in the belly of a fish ; the chaste Susannah in a garden ; the penitent thief upon the cross ; and they were all graciously heard ; although in the last extremity : why then should I not be also, if I do but imitate their prayer ?

Strive then to acquire a prayerful spirit ; surmount all the difficulties which meet men in the attempt, which are, distractions, weariness, and sloth, and thou wilt find much more enjoyment in it than thou canst now imagine ; speak, pray, supplicate, follow after Jesus, as did the woman of Canaan, and if thou art not heard, change, like her, thy prayers into vehement entreaties, and thy petition will be assuredly accepted.

AFFECTIONS.

Teach me, O God of Light and Goodness, to pray unto Thee, as Thou wouldest have me pray, that so I may obtain the graces most needful for me in order to work out and to assure my salvation. Inspire my soul, form in my heart by Thine Ownself and put upon my lips such prayers as Thou most willingly wilt hear and most graciously wilt accept : bestow upon me a like zeal with that wherewith the penitent of old time was inflamed, that so I may pray as he did, and say unto Thee, with him, " O LORD, I sighed in my wanderings ; I prayed, I spoke to Thee as Thou inspiredst me ; I cried with all my strength, and at length I have obtained." (Soliloq. ap. S. Aug.) I am sick, I cry to my Physician ; I am blind, I hasten to the Light ; I am dead, I sigh for the true Life. JESUS, Son of David, Fount of mercy, have pity upon me ; Thou art my Physician, heal me ;

Thou art my Light, enlighten me ; Thou art my Life, raise me again from death. (Ibid.)

Alas ! how often do I come to pray before Thee in Thy sanctuary, that I may obtain Thy Divine mercy. I deceive myself ; for often I come rather to trifle than to pray ; my lips speak, but my mind wanders, whilst my heart remains untouched ; I do not even hearken to myself, how then can I expect that Thou shouldst hearken unto me ? Thine Eyes see my body prostrate at Thy Feet in all the attitude of a suppliant, but often Thou seest there neither my mind nor my heart ; for my mind is far away, it grows weary, it is discouraged, and it is not fixed intently upon Thee : my heart is cold, and is harder than the rock of the desert. If it does sometimes begin to pray fervently before Thee, carelessness, lukewarmness, and heartlessness but too soon follow. Ah, Lord ! pray in me Thyself ; let my mind, my heart, and my tongue, be but Thine own instruments ; be Thou Thyself mine Example, and let the fervour and the submission with which Thou didst pray to Thy Heavenly Father, be henceforth the pattern I set before myself in praying to Thee, so may I more securely obtain from Thy gracious bounty all the petitions which Thou shalt inspire me to make before Thee.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON PRAYER.

Whensoever I call upon Thee, then shall mine enemy be put to flight ; this I know, for God is on my side. (Ps. lvi. 9.)

The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him : yea, all such as call upon Him faithfully. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him, He also will hear their cry. (Ps. cxlv. 18, 19.)

The LORD ever wills to give, because He is good, and He ever can give, because He is Almighty. (S. Aug. in Joan.)

By the heart is GOD entreated, by the heart is He sought, by the heart is the door of His Heart struck, and lastly, by the heart do we obtain that He openeth unto us. (Ibid.)

SEVENTEENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

THE CREATOR BECOME A CREATURE.

GOD is the Creator of this vast universe, and of all creatures visible and invisible inhabiting it; He has created all with the greatest ease, by a single word, nay, in sport, according to the language of Scripture, "disporting in the habitable part of the world;" *ludens in orbe terrarum* (Prov. viii. 31.); and by this awfully great and Divine disporting, did all things proceed easily from His Adorable Hand; and thus was His Infinite Greatness and our dependence established; for verily thus to bring all things out of nothing, as He has done, is the most authentic proof of His Almightyness and of His Divinity.

This is the difference between a maker and the Creator, that the maker works upon a material already existing, and which therefore receives from his industry and labour a new manner only of being (S. Thom. Aq.), but all which the Creator bringeth forth He draweth out of His own riches and out of nothingness, for creation is nothing else than a change from non-existence to existence; and this change, which can be the work of GOD alone, has in it a something so great, so supremely elevated and so Divine, says St. Bonaventura⁷, that even were all men and Angels

⁶ Vulg. more literally than the Eng. Vers. "rejoicing." [Ed.]

⁷ Serm. iii. de Angelis.

united together, they could not withdraw the smallest insect or the vilest creature from its nonentity. How great then His glory ! how vast His greatness !

But, oh, how infinite the goodness of my God ! Thou Who wast all-sufficient to Thyself, Whose delight was to dwell in Thine Own glory, hast yet drawn man out of nothingness to make him in Thine own Image ; to converse with him, to pour forth upon him the effusion of Thy Goodness, to make him partaker of Thine eternal glory, and by a new wonder, the very miracle of Thy Love, Creator as Thou art, Thou hast taken upon Thee the form of a creature, that so Thou mightest become the Saviour of man, by making Thyself his equal, nay, even his servant.

The Creator, even God Himself, descendeth from the throne of His glory, where He sitteth in Heaven ; He maketh Himself " a little lower than the Angels " (though they be His own creatures, and hence His subjects, and His worshippers), by taking our nature upon Him, which is so far below the " nature of Angels ; " He maketh Himself man, and so a creature with us, and in one sense " like unto " us (Heb. ii. 7. 14—17) ; not " to be ministered unto " by us, as He Himself so humbly said, " but to minister." (Mark x. 45.) He taketh a newly-created flesh upon Him, and a soul newly drawn from non-existence ; the HOLY GHOST unites this Flesh and Soul in order to give Him Life at the moment of His Incarnation, and Both together to the Person of the WORD, thus making of Them HIM, Who is both GOD and MAN, Who was not an instant before, as to His Humanity, albeit He is Eternal ; and thus we may behold the prodigious mystery whereby " God, manifest in the flesh," became the Subject, the Worshipper, the Creature, and the offering of God His Father, although through His Divinity He is Co-equal with Him.

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Intende animæ meæ, et libera eam ; propter inimicos meos eripe me.

Draw nigh unto my soul, and save it : O deliver me, because of mine enemies. (Ps. lxi. 19.)

The Third Wednesday in Advent.

DAY OF GRACE.

PRACTICE.

EARNESTLY beg for grace from our Lord JESUS CHRIST, directly thou awakest, for He hath obtained it for thee through His Incarnation and the outpouring of His most precious Blood. Entreat⁸ of Him a portion of that same grace which He bestowed upon His Mother the blessed Mary, who, in the Gospel, was saluted by the Angel as "full of grace," while the sacred mystery of the Incarnation was being accomplished in her chaste womb. Only entreat Him so fervently for this grace, as to ensure obtaining it ; preserve it so faithfully as never to risk losing it ; and co-operate so fervently with it, that it may daily grow up and strengthen within thee.

MEDITATION UPON GRACE.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

"Hail, full of grace", the Lord is with thee."
(Luke i. 28.)

⁸ Altered.

⁹ The difficult word *κεχαριτωμένη* is rendered "full of grace" by the Vulg., Syr., Copt. ; "filled with grace," Arab., Polyg.,

Here direct thy whole attention to this heavenly interview between the holy Gabriel and Mary, for in it wilt thou both discover all the most lovely features of grace, and wilt hear the deepest, the most impenetrable, and the most important of all the Mysteries of our religion treated of, even that which is the greatest of all the Mysteries of grace, and the fountain of all mercies; namely, the Mystery of the Incarnation, which was fulfilled in Mary at the moment she accepted the message of the Angel, who was speaking to her on the part of God.

This was an interview between two Angels and two Virgins, for Angels are Virgins, and Virgins are Angels¹; the one from Heaven, the other of earth; and though both then on earth, yet both of Heaven. Here grace shone most brightly; for the more the Angel exalted Mary, the more she abased herself; the more he spoke, the more she kept silence; and it was this humility which made her grace shine so brightly. Gather then from hence, that if thou

which admits of the beautiful sense, (which, in the Serm. i. in Annunc. S. M. V. ap. S. Greg. Thaum. p. 12, is derived from the Greek also,) "filled with Him Who is the Fountain of Grace." "Suitably did the Angel foreshadow to the Holy Virgin Mary first of all, 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee,' for with her was laid up the whole Treasure of Grace." This does not exclude other meanings, as of the Eng. Vers. "highly favoured;" Marg. "much graced," as Theoph. says it is explained by "hast found favour," v. 20; only, in any case, it implies that the grace (so to speak) was lodged in her, as St. Chrys. explains the same word, Eph. i. 6, of the Christian soul, that it was "made beautiful, an object of longing, and love," "made an object of delight and love to God Himself." See the beautiful passage, Hom. i. on the Ep. to the Eph. i. 6. p. 136, 7. Oxf. Tr. [Ed.]

¹ Luke xx. 36, so applied in the ancient Church, e. g. S. Cypr. de hab. virg. § 13. p. 129. Oxf. Tr. "In persevering in chasteness and virginity, you are equal unto the Angels of God" (ἰσάγγελοι, St. Luke). [Ed.]

wouldest obtain the grace of thy Lord, thou must begin by humbling thyself, for the measure of grace is that of humility, and God, Who "resisteth the proud, giveth grace to the humble."

"Hail, thou that art full of grace, the Lord is with thee," said the Angel: "He² Who is before thee, to-day is with thee, and shortly shall be of thee; the one in eternity, the other in time. O boundless Loving-kindness! O the gracious goodness of God! It sufficed not to point out the joy, without mention of the Author of that joy, in the Virgin-Birth. The words, 'the Lord is with thee,' show plainly the presence of the Lord Himself, wholly Incarnate in her, yet going not forth from His own glory. 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.' Joy, thou instrument of joy." Yea, indeed, how blessed to possess not only grace, but the fulness of grace! Remember, however, that Mary was not as yet the Mother of God, she was not so until a little while after these words, for the HOLY GHOST vouchsafed to³ await her consent, ere working within her chaste womb that

² From S. Andr. Cret. p. 2.

³ Attendait. There is often, in writers of the Roman communion, a mode of speaking on this "awaiting of the consent" of St. Mary, which gives us a sort of shock, as though they were intent on magnifying the creature, whose consent was awaited, rather than the unutterable condescension of the Creator, Who vouchsafed to make His dispensations of mercy wait on the conformity of the will of His creature with His own. Yet so that it be kept prominently in mind, that all is of God's grace, and overwhelming condescension, it is, of course, an acknowledged truth, that God, in all His designs towards man, does make them depend upon the concurrence of the will of His creature, to whom He has first given grace and power to will what He willeth, with His own. He forms His own instruments, so that they shall accomplish that for which He forms them; yet they become His instruments, by responding freely, with that will which He has made free, to His grace, and concurring with His purposes in and through them. [Ed.]

Incarnation of the WORD which raised her to the sacred quality of Mother of God, and heaped upon her yet new graces infinitely more sublime and more abundant: nevertheless she was already "full of grace;" but from that moment did the HOLY SPIRIT give her soul a new capacity for containing larger grace than all men and Angels together, that "through her" might come forth that ineffable Grace, whereof the Apostle spake aloud, 'the saving grace of God hath appeared unto all men;' through her might come forth the True Light, our Lord JESUS CHRIST, Who saith in the Gospel, 'I am the Light of the world,' 'the Light Who lighteneth every one that cometh into the world,'" and we might "have" JESUS through that same Spirit by Whom she conceived JESUS."

SECOND PART.

"And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." (Luke i. 38.)

After having fixed thy attention upon the fulness of grace in the Blessed Mary, thou must again direct it anew to her acquiescence and humble submission to this grace, in order to profit by her great example, and to learn to submit thyself to its guidance the moment it approaches thee; this is the lesson thou shouldest derive from thy reflections upon this mystery of grace.

The surpassing love of virginity cherished by this Virgin, "purer" and holier than the whole human race," united to her deep humility, had "troubled" her. "Shall" I, she thought, alone of women, form

⁴ Substituted from S. Cyril. Alex. Hom. in S. Mar. Deip. t. v. pt. ii. p. 381. [ED.]

⁵ Perhaps Paschas. Radb. [ED.]

⁶ Serm. ii. ap. S. Greg. Thaum. p. 17. "Plus pure que les Anges." Orig. [ED.]

⁷ From S. Andr. Cret. p. 22.

a new thing in nature? Can I alone bear a Fruit alone? What may be this salutation? Who that hath brought me this promise, and whence is he?" "She" answered with modesty because she feared, with prudence because she marvelled at this new form of benediction, which was never used, never before known. To Mary alone was this salutation reserved. For well is she alone called 'full of grace,' who alone had obtained that grace, which none besides attained, to be filled with the Author of grace."

But as soon as she was sure of remaining ever virgin, and that it was God Himself Who desired to exalt her lowliness to the awful dignity of the Divine Motherhood, she expressed her consent by these beautiful words: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to Thy word:" and she had no sooner pronounced them, than she felt herself wholly filled with His Divinity, and consequently with Grace, because she had conceived the Author of all Grace.

These two expressions of the Mother of God, ought to serve thee as a rule whereby to respond becomingly to grace: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," is the first, and the second is, "be it unto me according to thy word." As soon then as God speaks to thy soul, whether to inspire thee to do some good action, or to turn away from some evil one, follow the leading of His grace; humble thyself, acknowledge the greatness of God and thine own vileness, His authority and thine own dependence, as did Mary; and add directly, as she did, "Be it unto me according to Thy word:" fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum: obey promptly whatsoever He commandeth thee, execute it instantly, without the least delay, and by this means grace shall triumph within thee.

* From S. Ambr. in S. Luc. l. ii. § 9.

AFFECTIONS.

How much grief ought my numberless sins against Thy grace to cause me, O my Adorable Saviour! how many tears for the past, and how much fear for the future! Alas! I cannot think of them without trembling at the sight of Thy just Judgments, all the severity of which I have deserved. How often have I preferred the world, human respect, my sensuality, and my self-love, to the repeated solicitations of Thy grace. Thou didst speak to my soul, O gracious God! Thou didst enlighten my mind, Thou didst show it the good which I ought to have done, Thou didst even touch my heart, Thou didst make it feel that it was Thou Thyself Who wast speaking to me for my good: but at the same time the world was speaking to me also, though I might have felt sure that it was speaking only to distract me, to withdraw me from Thee, and to induce me to displease and disobey Thee. I have lent the ear of my heart to its pernicious words; I have not hearkened to those of Thy Grace. Alas! what groans, what tears, should this miserable preference cause me! And to Thee, O Lord, what a just subject is it of wrath and indignation against me!

Or even if sometimes, in some few efforts which I have made to overcome self, or during some few feelings of fleeting devotion, I have obeyed Thy Voice, and opened my heart to the leading of Thy Grace, I have so little tasted this celestial gift, so little preserved Thy Divine Presence, so little cultivated this precious treasure, which I ought to cherish more than all my goods, more even than my life, that beginning by small acts of unfaithfulness, which have become insensibly multiplied, I have weakened grace, and have at length constrained it to leave my heart.

Give it back to me, O merciful God, despite my

unworthiness, if I am so miserable as to be without it; strengthen it, sustain it, increase it, O God of strength, if I am so blessed as to possess it; henceforth I will be more faithful to it. As soon as Thou speakest to my heart, I will reply to Thee like Thy holy Mother, "Be it unto me according to Thy word," and I will conform myself to it instantly, and without delay.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON GRACE.

Let us therefore come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need. (Heb. iv. 16.)

We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (2 Cor. vi. 1.)

The Grace of God is ever good; and through it doth man come to have a good will having had an evil will; through it doth that same good will, which hath begun to be, grow so strong, that it can fulfil the Divine commands which it willeth, when it willeth mightily and perfectly. (S. Aug. de gr. et lib. arb. c. 15.)

Grace is freely given us by God; when given, He multiplies it; when multiplied, He keeps it; when kept, He crowns it in Heaven. (S. Bonav. Corp. Theol.)

EIGHTEENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

UNCREATED WISDOM BECOME FOOLISHNESS.

As God is supremely full of all knowledge, Wisdom is an inseparable attribute of His Divine Nature, and this Wisdom is without fault, She⁹ cannot be de-

⁹ Wisdom, it will be recollected, is spoken of as fem. in our Vers. Prov. viii. 9, &c.; as well as in the Heb., Sept., Vulg. See Guide for Lent, p. 209. ed. 2. [Ed.]

ceived ; She is uncreate, She is eternal even as God ; in a word, She is God Himself. She dwelleth in His Mind and in His Heart, and the first object of this Wisdom is God Himself ; by Her doth He know Himself, doth He love Himself, and all which is in Him : and Her second object is, all which is without Himself, that is to say, all creatures visible and invisible.

When this Divine Wisdom speaketh of Herself, She saith that She "is the breath of the Power of God, and a pure Influence flowing from the Glory of the Almighty." (Wisdom vii. 25.) Verily, She is attributed to Him, and it is by Her that He governs all, that He provides for all, and guides every thing to its end, with equal strength and sweetness.

The Word, Who is Himself Wisdom, became man to save us, and although the Incarnation was the work of sovereign Wisdom, nevertheless It is "to the Jews a stumblingblock," and has appeared to "the Greeks," that is to say, to well-nigh the whole universe, "foolishness :"
gentibus autem stultitiam. (1 Cor. i. 23.)

This uncreated Wisdom, in taking our flesh, in being born in a Stable, and by dying on a Cross, hath then become foolishness to the nations who have despised Him. The Incarnate Word hath endured all the shame of this, and from hence hath He finally drawn all His Glory ; and this pretended foolishness hath "openly triumphed" before the whole earth, over the false wisdom of this world. *Palam triumphans illos in semetipso.* (Col. ii. 15.)

They have counted it foolishness to attribute to God, Who is Wisdom Himself, humiliations, sorrows, and even death. Truly, said St. Paul, it is foolishness to them that perish ; but unto us who are saved it is the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. (1 Cor. i. 18. 24.) For seeing that the world, with

its human wisdom, knew not Him in the works of His Divine Wisdom, it pleased Him, by an apparent foolishness, to save them who come unto Him. (Ibid. 21.) For if we stedfastly contemplate the great work of the Incarnation, with all its glorious fruits, we shall see in it the "Wisdom of God" (Ibid. 24.), and we shall conclude, with the same St. Paul, that the Incarnate WORD hath been given unto us to be our "Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption." (Ibid. 30.)

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Utinam dirumperes cœlos, et descenderes. (Isaiah lxiv. 1.)

Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down !

The Third Thursday in Advent.

DAY OF MODESTY.

PRACTICE.

As we are about to speak of the peculiar modesty of the Blessed Virgin whilst conversing with the Angel, giving it thee as an example, we, therefore, propose perfect modesty to thee as a practice ; a modesty which is not satisfied with regulating the exterior, but hath its seat in the mind, in the heart, and in the entire soul, which humbleth itself, which endureth not praises, since it believeth them not to be deserved ; a modesty which from the mind and heart communicates itself to the looks, to the words, to the actions, to the movements, and to the whole exterior. Labour to resemble this most humble and modest Virgin.

MEDITATION UPON MODESTY.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

"And when Mary saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." (Luke i. 29.)

Mary was the most humble and the most pure of virgins; her deep humility and incomparable purity were the real causes of her being troubled; the innocent emotion of her heart is the evident proof of her modesty; and her modesty is the virtue which we must study and practise, if we would that God should work great things in us.

Mary is "troubled," because she is humble, and because she is saluted by an Angel, who exalts her and overwhelms her with praises¹⁰; recognizing her beforehand as the Mother of God; who tells her that she is "full of grace," and that she is "blessed among women." The truly humble and modest soul is ever troubled when praised; being "little in her own eyes," she believes that she deserves nothing but contempt; praise is intolerable to her modesty, for though truly worthy, yet this same modesty, proceeding from a humble spirit, conceals it from herself, and causes a trouble in her heart and in all the powers of her soul, which spreads itself even to her brow, and appears in her words, or rather in her silence: behold a great pattern of modesty! study it, imitate it, if thou wouldest be well-pleasing unto God.

But what will this holy Virgin do in her trouble, which was furnishing a spectacle so deserving of the Eye of that God, Who was Himself its Author? She

¹⁰ Omission. [Ed.]

will retire herself into her nothingness and into silence, where her incomparable modesty is distressed and terrified; there she weighs thoughtfully the amazing discourse of the Angel; but finding no issue, because this mission concerns her greatness, which her modesty believes not that she deserves, far from applauding herself on her worthiness, which she herself knows not, but which was known of God, she raises new difficulties; and ever retrenching herself within her modesty, she will protest only that she is "the handmaid of the Lord," *Ecce ancilla Domini*.

SECOND PART.

Mary is "troubled" by the saying of the Angel, because, though she is a Virgin, and a Virgin pure as¹ Angels, yet he speaks to her of becoming a mother: a second reason of her uneasiness, and a second proof of her excellent modesty. How useful is this example of modesty to Christian virgins, and how worthy it is of their attention!

Be often present in spirit at this Heavenly interview between Mary and the Angel of the Lord; go to the school of wisdom of this wisest and purest of maidens; for there wilt thou learn that modesty which so becometh thy sex; there wilt thou learn not to see men, except through necessity, and then

¹ "Purer than." Orig. Yet this refers to the time before the Conception. For by the Conception, indeed, any one who meditates on the Mystery of the Incarnation, must think that the Blessed Virgin has a nearness to God, closer than that of any other created being; in the words of S. Gregory the Great, "by the dignity of her election she transcends all elevation of all elected creatures. Is not Mary a 'high mountain,' who, that she might reach unto the Conception of the Eternal Word, reared the eminence of her attainment above all the choirs of Angels, even to the Throne of Deity?" (On 1 Kings, c. i. § 5.) See others, (as Chrysippus Hieros. A. 455; "The Heavenly Queen,") ap. Petav. de Incarn. xiv. 8. [Ed.]

even with fear ; not to converse with them, except with circumspection ; not to reply to them, but with bashfulness ; not to hear their praises and their flatteries, except with terror. Deeply engrave on thy heart the portrait of Mary whilst discoursing with the holy Gabriel, albeit he was an Angel sent from God ; the modesty of her looks, the purity of her sentiments, the exactness of her replies, the disquietude of her mind, and the innocent trouble of her heart, will teach thee, that thou shouldest ever be in fear and trembling, even though thou wert speaking to Angels.

Mary was the purest of Virgins ; and the supreme love she had for her virgin state had separated her from her infancy from the world, in order to consecrate her virginity² to God in the Temple³. Judge,

² St. Augustine infers from the answer of the Blessed Virgin (Luke i. 34), that she was under a vow of virginity, for there had been no ground to marvel, had she been betrothed under the ordinary laws of marriage. "This she would not have said, unless she had previously vowed herself as a virgin to God. But because the customs of the Israelites as yet admitted not of this, she was betrothed to 'a just man,' who should not by violence rob, but rather guard against the violent, what she had already vowed. Although had she only said, 'How shall this be?' without adding what follows, assuredly she would not have inquired this, how, as a married woman, she should bear the promised Son, had she been wedded under the laws of marriage." S. Aug. de S. Virg. c. 4. S. Greg. Nyssa. makes the same inference, de die nat. Dom. t. iii. p. 347, quoted by Petav. de Incarn. xiv. c. 5. [Ed.]

³ This rests on distinct ground, from the fact of the Blessed Virgin's vow of virginity. The earliest statement to this effect is in a history quoted as "apocryphal" by S. Greg. Nyssa. l. c., who says, that it is so far authenticated, in that Holy Scripture shows that she was under a vow (vide previous note). Tillemont (Note v. sur la S. Vierge) disparages the history. There is one very grave historical error in it, that the Mother of S. Mary prayed "within the holy of holies:" else the history has analogy in the offering of Samuel, and the education of Joash (2 Kings xi.), and Anna "departed not from the temple," day or night, "for fourscore and four years."

then, if a heart as pure as hers could hear her future motherhood 'spoken of without her modesty being frightened by it, and without that virgin heart experiencing that interior and mysterious "trouble" which tinged, even up to her forehead, those innocent features where her purity and modesty were engraved.

Nevertheless, Mary assents, because God commands her to do so by the mouth of this heavenly spirit, and she is now sure of remaining ever Virgin, despite her Maternity, and humble, despite her Greatness: and she shows, by declaring herself the "hand-maid of the LORD," that obedience to the orders of God, and modesty, are blended in her heart.

AFFECTIONS⁵.

O Adorable Saviour, Only-Begotten Son of God, before all worlds, but, in time, Son of that holy Virgin and wondrous mother, since she was not only both a virgin and a mother, but mother of Thee, Who art the Creating God of Heaven and of earth, and the Saviour of mankind; make me to reverence the mystery Thou didst work in her (though surpassing the powers of my mind to conceive); to cherish her profound humility and singular modesty in her exaltation. That mystery I can only adore, but her diffidence I may imitate; and henceforth I desire to look upon it as an example to follow, in order to arrive at perfection, and this I shall be enabled to do through Thine Almighty aid.

S. Ambrose did not know of the history, for he says, "she went not forth from her house, except to the Church" ["Temple," for he is speaking of her early life]. *De Virg.* ii. 2. 10.

⁴ "The Angel announces the Birth, but she clings to her Virgin state, judging integrity to be more honourable than the manifestation of the Angel." S. Greg. Nyss. l. c.

⁵ Changed from an Invocation. [Ed.]

Her deep humility, united to her incomparable purity, were the causes of her trouble, when the Angel spoke to her of becoming the Mother of Thee, the Almighty God, Who wouldest make to Thyself a Body of her most pure blood, which Thou mightest employ for the salvation of mankind. In this most mysterious and most holy trouble, did her angelic⁶ purity shine forth in all its lustre in Thine Eyes. By her purity and by her humility did she please Thy Divine Eyes, and Thou vouchsafedst to become her Son, and thereby to call us brethren.

Grant us, O Adorable Saviour, the grace of this modesty, so necessary to the work of our salvation; may humility and purity form it in our hearts, and from our hearts may it overflow to the glances of our eyes, the words of our lips, the actions of our hands, the well-ordering of our whole demeanour, and all our outward senses, that so we may ever walk circumspectly as in Thy Presence, O our God; may edify our neighbour, may obtain Thy Mercy and Thy Protection, and may bear about in all places Thy sweet savour⁷, our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON MODESTY.

By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honour, and life. (Prov. xxii. 4.)

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The LORD is at hand. (Phil. iv. 5.)

Be such the course of your life, that it spring from modesty as its first foundation. For she is the friend and companion of placidity of soul, fleeth wantonness, is an enemy to luxuriousness, loveth sobriety,

⁶ Plus qu'angélique. Orig. [Ed.]

⁷ 1 Cor. i. 15.

cherisheth propriety, seeketh what is of good report. (S. Amb. de off. i. 43.)

A modest one speaketh little and when needful, his countenance is calm, his eyes cast down and orderly, his air quiet, and his demeanour grave. (De Spirit. et Anim. ap. S. Aug. c. 4.)

NINETEENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

THE ALMIGHTY IN WEAKNESS.

There are men powerful upon earth who rule over others, but their power proceeds from God, Who can deprive them of it when it pleaseth Him ; their power hath its bounds, it endureth not, and as they are sinners, they oftentimes abuse their might.

The Power of God is far different ; it "belongeth unto" Him, as said the Prophet : *Potestas Dei est.* (Ps. lxii. 11.) It is inseparably attached to His Divine Nature, and from Him is derived all Power in Heaven and in earth ; all things are subjected unto Him in this vast universe, and there is nothing beyond His power to accomplish ; hence He calleth Himself "the Almighty." His Power is eternal ; as it hath had no beginning, so shall it have no end, as it is said in the Prophet Daniel (iv. 3. 34.) Finally, as it is united to sovereign Justice, there can be no imperfection in the exercise of His Almightyness.

Nevertheless this Almighty God hath made Himself man ; He beginneth His Mortal Life by infancy ; in this what weakness ! He hath finished It upon the Cross ; in this what exceeding weakness ! "He was crucified through weakness ;" *Crucifixus est ex infirmitate*, saith St. Paul. (2 Cor. xiii. 4.) If I raise mine eyes to Heaven, I there see by faith God Almighty, God the Creator, Who, by a single word, draweth celestial spirits and men alike from nothing, in order to make them His worshippers,

together with all which is contained in this vast universe. I adore this Almighty One, and I am seized with fearfulness and awe; but mine eyes, which I had raised, must I now bring down again, that they may contemplate a Babe lying upon straw, uttering infant cries; and my reason, left to itself, would say: "Behold a child as weak as others!"

But I ask faith, and she telleth me, that this Child is God, and the same Almighty God Whom I have been just adoring upon His Heavenly Throne, Who, for the love He beareth me, hath espoused my weakness, by clothing Himself in my flesh. Struck by this miracle of love, I ask myself: "Can it be that this feeble child, without even the power of speech, is That Word of the Father by Which He hath made all things? Can it be that His little Hands are able to overthrow the thrones of this earth's mighty monarchs, and to dispose of life and death?"

Yes, verily, it is This same God Who is thus weak; and by this same Weakness it is, that His Almightyness shines forth. (1 Cor. i. 25.) Ah! now do I comprehend, with St. Paul, that "the Weakness of God is stronger than man;" now do I perceive that I owe more to His Weakness than to His Strength; His Power hath drawn me forth from my non-existence, His Weakness hath rescued me from hell, and hath opened to me the gates of Heaven; His Might hath given me the life of the body, His Weakness hath given me that of the soul; how much then am I constrained to love Him!

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Specie tuâ et pulchritudine tuâ intende, prosperè procede, et regna.

Gird Thee with Thy Glory and Thy Majesty, and in Thy Majesty prosper Thou, ride Thou. (Ps. xlv. 3, 4.)

The Sixteenth Day of December.

THE FIRST OF THE NINE DAYS⁸ BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

DAY OF THANKSGIVING.

GENERAL PRACTICE FOR THE NINE DAYS.

CELEBRATE this holy season of nine days before Christmas with renewed fervour; strive to increase in piety, in love, and in holy desires, in proportion as the blessed moment of thy redemption draweth near; unite thyself with the numerous Churches and multitude of faithful souls who solemnize the mysterious nine days, which bring us on our way to the great Festival of our Salvation, with much piety and religious worship, in order to honour the nine months during which our Adorable Saviour was shut up in the sacred womb of His Divine Mother.

That thou mayest enter into the spirit of this deep devotion, it will be well for thee to offer daily a particular homage to **JESUS CHRIST**, as lying in the stable of Bethlehem; on the first of these nine days (which is to-day) this homage is to be paid to the Mind of that Adorable Saviour enclosed in an Infant's body; on the second thou wilt offer it to His Heart⁹, on the third to His Mouth, on the fourth to His Eyes, on the fifth to His Hands, on the sixth to His Feet, on the seventh to His Flesh, on the eighth to His Soul, and on the ninth to His Divinity. Each day may be finished by an affective paraphrase upon the Antiphone¹⁰, which will supply the place of the Ejacula-

⁸ See Author's Preface, p. 9.

⁹ On these forms of devotion see a few words, Pref. to Surin, Foundations of the Spiritual Life, p. xxvii. xxxvi.

¹⁰ Used at Vespers in the Breviary Service. See Tracts for the Times, No. 75.

tory Prayer of the preceding days ; these celebrated Antiphones being so many desires and prayers of the Prophets for obtaining the Messiah.

PARTICULAR PRACTICE FOR THE SIXTEENTH DAY
OF DECEMBER.

As this holy period of nine days begins to-day, in order to honour the first month of the Incarnation, and the first moment of the abiding of the Incarnate Word in the chaste womb of His Mother, begin by consecrating thy day also to the Incarnation of the Word ; occupy thyself with loving reflections upon this profound Mystery ; meditate ¹, from time to time, on the Angel Gabriel as now coming to announce to this pure Virgin the mystery of our reconciliation, and that she was about to become the Mother of God ; now on Mary as at that instant conceiving the Incarnate Word without losing aught of her virginity ; then on God the HOLY GHOST, as now working the Incarnation of the Son of God, in an ineffable and wholly Divine manner, and forming Him a Body of the purest blood of this Virgin ; or, finally, upon JESUS CHRIST Himself, as being now conceived, and beginning to be clothed with our flesh, that thereby He may be made like unto us and save us.

But as this day is consecrated to thankfulness, strive to enter into the inmost heart of this holy Virgin, that thou mayest admire and imitate her gratitude. As soon then as she was sensible of being the Mother of God, she went to the house of her cousin Elisabeth, there to make a public act of thanksgiving for her Divine Maternity. Unite thy gratitude to-day to hers, and thank that God of Glory and of Grace for having mercifully willed to become

¹ Slightly altered. [ED.]

man for thy salvation ; and multiply acts of this as often as thou canst during the day.

MEDITATION UPON THANKSGIVING.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

“ My soul doth magnify the LORD, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour : for He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden.” (Luke i. 46—48.)

Observe, that St. Elisabeth, upon the arrival of Mary, had perceived both the grace which was shed upon her lips, and the Presence of the Author of all grace, Whom that Divine Mother was bearing in her chaste womb, and having felt the leap of John the Baptist in her own, she exclaimed, through the operation of that HOLY SPIRIT with Which she had just been filled : “ Blessed art thou among women ; and whence is this to me, that the Mother of my LORD should come to me ? ”

This pure praise, which set Mary above all other women, and above all mortal creatures², immediately drew from the lips of the Virgin Mother that sublime canticle of the Magnificat, which may well be called an act of continual thanksgiving, whose every word might fully deserve to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Altogether overwhelmed with the sight of her own lowliness, she refers to God all the praises which are bestowed upon herself ; she proclaims the greatness and the Power of God, only the better to set forth her own vileness and her own nothingness. It is a conflict between greatness and humility, between blessings and thankfulness, in

² As being, so saith the HOLY GHOST, “ the mother of ” Elisabeth’s and their “ LORD ” and God.

which grace decides the victory: she is treated as the Mother of God; she looks upon herself, and desires that others should look upon her, but as His handmaid; she proclaims with thanksgiving that it is God Who hath wrought all within her; and she magnifieth the Holiness of His Name, the vastness of His Power, and the greatness of His Mercies.

Here then is a great example of gratitude: imitate it; offer continual thanksgivings to God for all His benefits; acknowledge, like Mary, thy vileness and thy nothingness; adore, praise, and magnify His Greatness and His Power with the same humility: this is the way in which thou must strive to discharge thy debts of gratitude towards thy Sovereign Benefactor, and obtain new graces from His Bounty, for He setteth no bounds to the favours He bestoweth on thankful hearts.

SECOND PART.

Attentively consider that thankfulness is a debt, a virtue, and a sacrifice. It is a debt which we incur from the moment we receive a favour; hence it is an injustice not to pay it, and one still greater not to acknowledge it. It is a virtue by which we know and feel that all our good things come from God, which engages us to return towards Him, to praise Him, and to thank Him with our whole mind, with our whole heart, with our whole voice, and with all our good works.

Such was the thankfulness of the holy Mary; she began by humbling herself, by declaring her nothingness, and by acknowledging herself beholden to the Power and Goodness of God for that which He had done in her; her whole mind was applied to the acknowledgment of His Divine Mercies, her whole heart was penetrated with the liveliest gratitude, her whole voice declared it in the glorious song

of thanksgiving which she pronounced aloud; and she was about to express her thankfulness by her good works, in humbly serving her cousin, during the three months she was to abide with her.

If thankfulness be a debt, hast thou ever fully acquitted thyself of it towards God, to Whom thou owest all thou hast, and all thou art? If thou be not attentive daily to pay this thy debt, thou art unjust and ungrateful, since there is neither day, nor hour, nor moment, in which thou art not beholden to God, were it only for thy preservation, which He oweth thee not.

Dost thou practise this virtue of gratitude as thou art bound to do? Does thy mind meditate upon it as often as it ought? Is thy heart penetrated with it? Is it sensible as it ought to be of the continual bounties of God? Dost thou not sometimes attribute to thine own skill that which cometh but from Him Alone? Does thy voice take part in the sweet harmony of this virtue? does it often speak of it? Does it offer Him sacrifices of praise, that it may acknowledge thereby the graces and mercies for which thou art beholden to Him? Think attentively upon this.

AFFECTIONS.

How greatly do I here feel mine impotency and my weakness, O my Divine Saviour, and my extreme need of Thy Help, in order to render Thee those thanksgivings which I owe Thee! I ought to make the multitude of my thanksgivings equal the number of my respirations, since Thy favours are continually towards me; but, alas! I have never meetly acquitted myself of this righteous duty; my memory forgets Thy benefits, my mind too dissipated applies not itself to their remembrance, my ungrateful heart feels them not, my voice offers Thee not the

sacrifice of praise as often as it ought ; and I confess, with grief and shame, my coldness, my injustice, and mine ingratitude. Thou hast taken me out of nothing ; I owe Thee both my being and my life ; and this whole life ought I to consecrate to thanksgiving. Thou hast given me life and grace, Thou hast clothed Thyself with my flesh, Thou hast suffered, Thou hast died, that for me Thou mightest merit the life of glory ; my memory forgets this, my mind thinks not of it, my heart feels it not, and my mouth keeps silence when it ought to burst forth in acts of praise. Help me then, O LORD ; give faithfulness to my memory, but only that I may recollect Thy benefits ; liveliness to my imagination, but only that I may think of them ; tenderness to my heart, but only that I may feel them ; and utterance to my voice, but only that I may declare them.

Or, rather, O my Saviour, take upon Thyself the charge of my thankfulness, that so I may say to Thee with humble confidence, like the Prophet : " The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me," *Dominus retribuet pro me. (Ps. cxxxviii. 8.)* Render thanks for me to Thy Heavenly Father ; render thanks to Thyself for the favours for which I am beholden to Thee : Thou hast given me Thy Flesh, Thy Blood, Thy Passion, Thy Death, and Thine Infinite Merits ; this is mine inestimable treasure : I offer them to Thee, O my LORD, to Thine Own Self, as a thank-offering. Surely Thou wilt accept them !

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE
FATHERS.

UPON THANKSGIVING.

What reward shall I give unto the LORD, for all the benefits that He hath done unto me ? (*Ps. cxvi. 11.*)

In every thing give thanks : for this is the Will of

GOD IN CHRIST JESUS concerning you. (1 Thess. v. 18.)

Happy is he who carefully recollecteth all the mercies he hath received, who often placeth them before his eyes, and who continually giveth God thanks for them! (St. Bern. Sermon. x. in Cant.)

The giving of thanks lights the fire of Divine Love in our hearts, draws down the loving-kindness of God upon us, and fits us for still larger grace. (St. Carth. in Epist. ad Col.)

TWENTIETH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

GLORY IN IGNOMINY.

There is none but GOD Who, to speak truly, is verily glorious. The definition even which is given of glory beseemeth not His, when it is said that "glory is a distinct knowledge of merit accompanied with praise." That of God is independent of all knowledge, and of all, yea, even of the most lofty praise. For before His Almighty Hand had drawn either angels or men from their non-existence, He was known and praised by none; yet was He not, therefore, a whit less Glorious.

The GOD of Glory sufficed to Himself, He knew Himself, He loved Himself, He praised Himself, He took infinite delight in inhabiting within His Own Greatness, which is the privilege of GOD Alone, and He was to Himself, says Tertullian³, Heaven, Temple, Worshipper, and All; and this glory it is which He hath declared should never be given to other. He hath formed to Himself creatures who have acknowledged this glory by their adorations and their praises, but cannot, even when united, add anything essential thereunto. Angels sing its praises "in the Heights;" men acknowledge it upon earth; the Heavens even,

³ See above, p. 62, note.

although insensible, "declare and shew it forth." *Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei.* (Ps. xix. 1.)

It is, nevertheless, this Glory which appeared eclipsed and sacrificed in the Mystery of the Incarnation, in order that contempt, humiliation, and infamy might be substituted in its place; verily, if it were said of one, that "he was born in a stable and upon straw; from his infancy was he searched for by a king that he might be slain; he has passed his life in contempt, in ill-fame, and in persecution; a whole people, with their rulers at their head, have required his death; a murderer and a rebel has been preferred before him; and, finally, he has died upon a tree as a malefactor between two thieves;" we should assuredly reply, that such an one was indeed born, as he has lived and died, in the most ignominious shame.

Yet, behold what the Divine Word doeth in His Incarnation, because He loveth us, because He willeth that we too should love Him, and should walk in His steps, which are become glorious since He hath marked them out for us, as the Apostle said of himself and of the Christians of his times: "we are patient in distresses, in imprisonments, in necessities, and in dishonour, in evil report and good report;" *per infamiam et bonam famam.* (2 Cor. vi. 4—8.) Jesus Himself found glory in His Shame, says St. Augustine; He draweth His Greatness from His Lowliness, His Humility is His Exaltation, and His Contumelies are His Glory and ours.

HOMAGE TO THE MIND OF THE INFANT.

JESUS IN THE MANGER.

Adorable Mind of my Jesus, I adore Thee, and offer Thee my most loving and respectful homage, although enclosed in the Body of a new-born Babe.

O depth! O height! O abyss of wisdom and of knowledge! The purer are they as Thou hast drawn them from the Bosom of the Divinity, which is in Thee: the worthier of reverence and affection art Thou, as having hid Thyself, for my sake, in a little infant Body, which now containeth all Thy Wisdom, in order to appear in ignorance only, even as other children. Nevertheless, O Mind of the Infant JESUS, if it pleased Thee, Thou couldst shine in the Crib and at Thy Birth, as Thou shalt hereafter shine in the midst of the Doctors, who will admire Thy deep wisdom. Heal mine ignorances, O Fount of Light, dispel my darkness, enlighten my soul; and, whilst enlightening it, kindle it with Thy Divine Love, that it may know Thee, and that my whole heart may love Thee in time and in eternity.

EJACULATORY PRAYER.

Surge, illumina, Jerusalem, quia venit lumen tuum, et gloria Domini super te orta est. (Isa. lx. 1.)

Arise, be enlightened, O Zion; for thy Light is come, and the Glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.

The Seventeenth Day of December.

DAY OF OBEDIENCE.

PRACTICE.

ENTER to-day into the dispositions of a soul perfectly obedient to the commands of GOD; conduct thyself in this matter with ardent zeal; be attentive to His Voice; He will not fail to speak to thy heart. As

soon as thou seest the light, walk onwards ; if not, it will be extinguished, and God will speak no more. Take the Blessed Mary for thine example ; like her be obedient to inspiration ; follow her in mind and heart during her journey of love ; attentively study all her ways ; conform thine own to the Will of God as soon as thou knowest it.

MEDITATION UPON OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

" Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda." (Luke i. 39.)

It is important to remark, that in this there was a continuation of obedience to God, and a devoted perseverance in the practice of that great virtue. Mary had before been obeying God, by saying to the Angel : " Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word ;" and this last act of most submissive obedience had just been recompensed in the most glorious of all ways, since she immediately became the Mother of God.

But this same God, after His Incarnation in her chaste womb, inspired her to go to visit her cousin Elizabeth, both to announce to her this great tidings, and to bring Grace and the Author of all grace to the yet unborn John Baptist : and Mary obeyed, and set forth on her journey.

Derive these two conclusions and two instructions from the punctual obedience of Mary : first, that God hath ever wondrously recompensed obedience, because He doth not look upon it as a common virtue, but as a homage offered to His Sovereign Dominion, and as a sacrifice which surpasseth in

"sweet savour," and is infinitely "more pleasing" to Him than all those of the Old Testament, as He Himself declares by the mouth of the prophet Samuel: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. xv. 22); for in the former was offered up the flesh of another only, but in the latter is immolated self.

The obedience of Abraham was rewarded by a numerous posterity, and he obtained to become one of the forefathers of CHRIST; the obedience of Mary obtained for her to be His Mother.

Secondly, thou shouldest conclude from the consideration of Mary's obedience, that it sufficeth not to obey the LORD once, but that thine obedience must be persevered in even until death, as this divine Mother did, yea, as did her Adorable Son Himself, Who preferred to forfeit His Life rather than His Obedience. Verily, this Almighty God is ever our Sovereign LORD; He ever hath the right to command us, and we are obliged to obey Him at every moment of our life; let us then obey with perseverance, if we would have the crown which He hath promised us.

SECOND PART.

"Mary went into the hill country with haste." (Luke i. 39.)

Reflect here again on two important points contained in these expressions of the Gospel; the one in the phrase "with haste," the other in that of "into the hill country:" the first shows the promptitude of the obedience; the second, the courage in surmounting the difficulties met with.

As soon as Mary knew the will of God, "she arose," says the Evangelist, "with haste;" her obedience would not be delayed. A truly obedient soul, says St. Bernard¹, receives the command of God and

¹ Serm. i. See Guide to Lent, p. 326.

of her superiors in her very heart; she cuts short all those reflections which might arise from self-indulgence, from vanity, or from human respect: she loves obedience, because it forms her great security and her repose of conscience: this love extends itself even to the order given her, and to the thing ordained her; she would consider the smallest delay a crime; scarcely is the order given, than it is, if one may so speak, carried off and executed; the ear is ever attentive, the eyes open, the tongue ready to speak, the hand to labour, and the feet to walk, the first moment that God speaketh.

Secondly, obedience ought to be willing to undertake every thing, even impossibilities: that of Mary was indeed devoted, and could neither be abated by the steepness of the mountains, nor the exceeding heat of the season, nor by the tenderness of her age, nor by the delicacy of her constitution, nor by the difficulty of the journey.

How pleasant a sight was it to see this youthful virgin, scarcely advanced beyond childhood, courageously walking through deserts and over mountains, despite the extreme heat! What effect must not the burning warmth of the sun have had upon her! for (it is said ²) since she was three years old she had never before come out of the Temple; and so this would be her first journey; but in obedience did she find resources against her weakness; so true is it that he who obeys with readiness and courage finds nothing difficult.

AFFECTIONS.

"O venerable and holy obedience, the salvation of all the faithful," the security to our conscience, "the guardian of all virtues, thou openest Heaven

² Added. See above, p. 133. n. 3.

and closest hell³." Thou art the work of faith, the trial of hope, the proof of charity, and a goodly kind of martyrdom, which is not inferior to the other either in desert or in reward, and thou gainest us glorious victories over the Evil One, over the world, and over ourselves. (S. Bon. de Alph. Relig.)

This high and true praise overwhelms me with shame, and penetrates my heart with sorrow, when I think of my disobedience. Should not the name of Christian, which I bear, be enough to urge me to obey, since I am led forward by a King, a Lawgiver, a Saviour, a JESUS, Who "became obedient unto death, even the Death of the Cross?"

VERY GOD that Thou art, O my JESUS, yet Thou didst humble Thyself, says St. Paul; and this wondrous humility, which ought to have been unknown to Thee, hath engaged Thee to obey Thy Heavenly Father, because Thou lovest me, though Thou wast in all things "equal" unto Him; and I, I have but too often disobeyed Thine orders, although full well I knew Thy will, and the benefits which I should derive from my obedience both in time and in eternity: or if sometimes I have practised it, I have done it with so many delays and so much laxity, that my obedience had no likeness to Thine, and could not be well pleasing unto Thee.

Teach me, O LORD, to obey Thee, as Thou Thyself hast obeyed: cut short my rebellions, and pardon them; subdue my mind, awaken my listlessness, induce my will ever to follow Thine, and kindle within me a holy zeal, that I may be obedient unto Thee, even unto my last breath.

³ Serm. v. ad Fratr. in erem. App. St. Aug. t. vi. p. 309.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE
FATHERS.

UPON OBEDIENCE.

Incline your ear, and come unto me ; hearken, and your soul shall live. (Isa. lv. 3⁴.)

JESUS humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a NAME Which is above every name. (Phil. ii. 8, 9.)

Neither occupation in holy action, nor the repose of exalted contemplation, nor the effusion of penitential tears, can dispense from obedience. (S. Bern. in Sermon.)

How few Christians are there whose obedience is so perfect, and who have so renounced their own will, as to have kept back no exclusive right over their own heart, that so they may be incessantly attentive, not to what they will, but to what God wills ! (S. Bern. Sermon. ii. de Convers.)

TWENTY-FIRST POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

LIBERTY IN SLAVERY.

As God is by His Divine Nature a Being dependent upon none, and as His Will is the first mover of all created wills, He is not only Free in Himself, but He is, besides, the Author and Beginner of all freedom. Angels and men have truly been created free, but their freedom is a grace which was not due to them, and a participation and an overflowing of That of God ; but the Freedom of God is attached to His Essence. Many among them have abused their liberty ; but as the Liberty of God is inseparable from righteousness, He can will only

⁴ Substituted for a doubtful text from the Vulg. [Ed.]

what is good : He can do all He wills, and all He wills is holy.

It was by an act of this Divine Will, directed by His Love for men, that the Love of God was made man, and came to sacrifice His Liberty by subjecting Himself to all the miseries of humanity, sin only excepted. It is true that the Son of God did never lose, nor could lose, the foundation of His Liberty ; but He did voluntarily lose its appendages, its use, and all the honour which He might have been deriving from it, in taking upon Him the likeness of a sinner, of a servant, and of a slave.

Let us go in spirit to the Manger, there shall we see a Babe dependent upon all, subject to all, like other children ; His Mind, in Which are all the treasures of God's Wisdom and Knowledge, hath deprived Itself of the liberty of discovering Itself such as It is ; His Heart, Which is the centre and the throne of Divine Love, hath made itself unable to kindle its bright flames ; He hath a Mouth, but He cannot speak ; Hands, but He cannot act ; Feet, but He cannot walk.

In a word, this Adorable Saviour will be (through His Own Choice) "in the form of a servant," and will be in it till His Death. (Phil. ii. 7.) O blessed and awful servitude ! O precious and life-giving slavery ! since He hath taken its likeness and its humiliations only to "deliver us from the shameful bondage of sin, and to translate us into the glorious liberty of the children of God : " truly ought this to inspire us with love for the Deliverer Who hath broken our chains, and with hatred and horror for the service of sin.

PARAPHRASE UPON THE ANTIPHONE

"O SAPIENTIA."

"O Eternal Wisdom, which proceedest from the Mouth of the Most High, reaching from one end of creation unto the other, mightily and harmoniously disposing all things; Come Thou, to teach us the way of understanding." (Ecclus. xxiv. 3; Wisd. viii. 1.)

O Divine Wisdom! Eternal Wisdom! Wisdom Uncreate! Who hast issued from the Mind, the Heart, and Mouth of the Most High: from His Mind, to know and to foresee things furthest off, and to cause the most desperate to succeed; from His Heart, to make men love and accept the means He useth to effect His Adorable designs; from His Mouth, to signify His Will to man, and to make him hearken respectfully thereto: O Wisdom, Who compasses all Thine ends, and mightily subdues all obstacles, disposing all things with such ineffable sweetness as to gain the most savage and rebellious hearts: approach to instruct us, approach to teach us the ways of understanding, and to conduct us safely in the paths of salvation.

HOMAGE TO THE ADORABLE HEART OF JESUS
IN THE CRADLE.

O Adorable Heart of my Jesus, the only Object of all my tender affections, the delicious Centre of all my desires, in which so many mysteries of love have already passed, since the HOLY SPIRIT formed Thee of the pure blood of Mary, and during that space of nine months for which Thou hast been shut up in her chaste womb, I offer Thee all the most respectful and most loving homage of my heart. Thou art close locked within the bosom of a Babe, which hideth from us Thine ardent love; nevertheless, Thou

burnest with love incomprehensible for Thy Heavenly Father, and Thou offerest Him an infinite and surpassingly meritorious homage and adoration; Thou art enkindled too with love for men, for, to save them, Thou sacrificest Thyself; to this sacrifice do I unite myself with my whole heart, both for time and for eternity.

The Eighteenth Day of December.

DAY OF PENITENCE.

PRACTICE.

AFTER having adored God upon awaking as the "God of all Mercies," begin the day by an act of sorrow for having offended Him. Clothe thyself anew with the spirit of penitence; reflect, as the Prophet Isaiah speaks, "with great bitterness of heart," upon thy sins of years gone past. (Isa. xxxviii. 17.) Renounce for to-day all schemes and parties of joy and pleasure: separate thyself, deprive thyself, punish thyself, do all and receive all in a penitential spirit; make acts of heartfelt penitence, and frequently address to God the words of the Prophet: "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. li. 17.)

MEDITATION UPON PENITENCE.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

"The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness." (Luke iii. 2.)

Seriously reflect upon this remarkable commence-

ment, which sufficiently shows that it refers to some very important event. For who is he that hath caused his voice to be heard? It is God Himself Who hath unsealed His Adorable Lips, in order to teach His Will and to establish anew the great precept of penitence, which men had well nigh forgotten, as the only means of appeasing His Wrath, and of worthily preparing themselves for His Coming.

To whom did this Divine Word address Itself? To John, whom He chose as His minister, being the more worthy to preach the Baptism of Repentance, as from his childhood he had ever practised the severest penance; had ever declared a ruthless war with sensuality, leading a life terrible to self-indulgence, living but upon "locusts and wild honey."

But where was John the Baptist at the time he heard this Voice of God? He was in the desert, where he had passed his whole life in preparing himself for his office.

So is it in solitude that God speaks most strikingly to our hearts, since there they are not dissipated by objects of sight and hearing; in solitude it is that man practises repentance most safely, for there is he least exposed, least turned aside, most recollected, most sheltered from human respect, having the Eye of God Alone, as the witness of his tears and of his acts of penitence.

Withdraw thyself from worldly society, be heedful to the voice of God and of His divine Forerunner; prepare thy heart by penitence, for the Birth of Jesus Christ which now draws nigh; make "straight and plain" the "highway" by which He must come to visit us.

SECOND PART.

"And John came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance." (Luke iii. 3.)

Open the ear of thy heart, that thou mayest attentively hearken to the oracle which speaketh from the desert: the voice of the great Messenger is heard no longer in the country about Jordan, but through the whole Church, that so it may urge all Christians to repent, yea, to repent truly, lest they fall into the terrible Hands of an Avenging God.

Compare the acts of repentance thou hast as yet performed with those which John the Baptist, and the Saints who followed him, embraced and practised. Here he calls it "a baptism;" for it must so wash the sinner as to leave no stain upon him which could displease the Eye of God. St. Augustine calls⁵ it "a sincere grief and a true bitterness of heart." St. Basil calls⁶ it "an act of justice, and a compensation for the offence which has been committed against God." St. Chrysostom calls⁷ it "a holy anger, and a just vengeance, accompanied with hatred, detestation, and horror for the sin." And St. Thomas Aquinas calls⁸ it "a virtue which works the total destruction of sin, a full satisfaction to the Justice of God, and a total renovation of the sinner."

And now examine whether thy penitence resembleth those portraits of it which the holy Fathers have traced. If thou art sincere, thou wilt confess that many of these features are wanting in it, which thou must needs supply. Ask thyself then if thou hast as yet been wholly washed by this second Baptism; if thy heart has been penetrated with this piercing grief, and saturated with this most wholesome bitterness; if thy penitence can be called a just compensation, and if the Justice of God can be content with⁹ the punishment thou hast inflicted upon thyself; if thou hast had that horror, that aversion, that

⁵ De Doctr. Christ.

⁶ Hexaem.

⁷ Hom. 4. ad P. Ant.

⁸ 3 Part. q. 85.

⁹ See Pref. on Guide to Lent, p. xxx.

detestation of sin ; if thou hast exercised against thyself such a vengeance as may be able to avert from thee the vengeance of God ; finally, if thou hast entirely destroyed in thyself both sin and the affection for sin. Examine thyself, bewail thyself, repent thyself.

AFFECTIONS.

Unite thyself, O my soul, to the holy company of Israelites who follow the Baptist to the wilderness, that they may hear from his lips the words of life, and receive from his hands the Baptism of Repentance, that thou mayest thus prepare thyself for the reception of thy Divine Redeemer. But, O my God, already hast Thou procured for me, through Thy great Mercy, an infinitely more awful and more efficacious Baptism than this, seeing it has effaced my sins, given me Thy grace, and made me an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. Alas ! how have I preserved this baptismal grace ? how often have I not been obliged to recur anew to the baptism of repentance, to recover the grace which I had lost ! Can I even now hope that I have recovered it ?

I implore of Thee, O my Adorable Saviour, that true baptism of repentance which can reconcile me perfectly to Thee for ever ; that baptism of water, yea, the water of mine own tears, which may yet more wash me from mine iniquities, even though it must needs have all the bitterness of that hyssop which the penitent Prophet used to implore of Thee. Baptize me besides with the Baptism of Thy Spirit, of that Spirit of light and holiness which Thy Fore-runner hath promised us, that thereby I may be led in the paths of salvation, and, oh ! that I may faithfully follow Its Divine inspirations. Baptize me with the baptism of fire, even of Thy Divine Love, that it may purify my heart from all its stains, and

so enkindle it by its own holy fervour, that it may never more burn with other flames : I consent even, O Lord, to pass through the baptism of blood in order to expiate my sins. Thou hast given me all Thine own most precious Blood, that Thou mightest open to me the gates of Heaven ; most just then is it that I should consecrate all mine to Thee.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON REPENTANCE.

Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand. (Matt. iv. 17.)

Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. (Luke iii. 8.)

There are but two things which render repentance sure ; hatred of sin, and the love of God. (Serm. iii. de Nativ. Dom. App. S. Aug.)

He who is truly penitent, fears not the greatest severity of penance ; but he undertaketh all with joy, and relaxeth not. (S. Greg. Mor.)

TWENTY-SECOND POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

AN INNOCENT PENITENT.

Innocence, which among men is a rare and precious treasure, is found only among certain elect souls who have preserved the grace of baptism. On the side of God it is a grace ; on the side of the faithful it is a virtue and a courage, proof against inclination and temptation : this Innocence in God is an attribute of His Divine Nature, Which sovereignly hateth sin : an innocent man may sin, for he is frail, and his evil concupiscence giveth him an inclination for sin ; " the just," even, says the Holy Spirit, " falleth seven times a day," but God is sinless by nature, and if He could sin, He would not be God,

and this impossibility of sinning is His Glory. Thus the most perfect man being able to sin, and committing daily faults, although slight, is not perfectly innocent; and is therefore obliged to repent.

Nevertheless this God, Alone impeccable, and possessing an infinitely perfect Innocence, hath loved men "when they were yet sinners," because they are the work of His Hands, and in forming them He impressed His Image upon them. It was in consequence of this Love that He became man, that He willed to take their likeness, after having given them His own, and that whilst espousing their nature, without losing aught of His sinlessness, He took upon Himself to satisfy the Justice of God His Father for them, and thus to unite, by a miracle of love, the most rigorous penitence to the most perfect and the most sublime Innocence.

The sin of man deserved an eternal penance, because in offending an Infinite Majesty there was, in his sin, a malignity, in one sense, infinite. JESUS CHRIST came to deliver him from this eternal punishment, provided sinful man accepts and imposes on himself a temporal penance; still it is this "God manifest in the flesh" Who giveth it all its value, Who maketh it able to effect this blessed exchange of time for eternity, by inspiring it Himself by His Grace, and by uniting it to His Own and to His Satisfaction, which are of an infinite desert.

He practised the most grievous of all penances during His whole Life; He even began it when coming into the world, by being born in a forsaken stable, by suffering exile, by living as a fugitive almost as soon as born, exposing Himself to labour, to servitude, to humiliations, to the most cruel punishment, and to the most ignominious and the most dreadful of all deaths. Unite thy penance to His; He giveth It up to thee because He loveth thee.

PARAPHRASE UPON THE ANTIPHONE

" O ADONAI."

" O Lord and Ruler of the House of Israel, Who appearedst unto Moses in the flame of the burning bush, and gavest to him the law in Sinai; Come to redeem us with a stretched-out arm." (Ex. iii. 2. 19. vi. 6. 3.)

O Lord of lords, King of kings, Ruler of Heaven and of earth, Leader of the house of Israel to that promised land which was a type of the heavenly heritage, purchased for us by the shedding of Thy Blood, whither Thou now leadest us by Thy Grace; Thou appearedst to Moses in the bush of fire; Thou gavest Him an all-holy law upon the Mount of Sinai, though but a preparation for that sacred Law of Grace, which Thou now willest to write upon our inward heart, in the new Covenant Thou hast graciously sealed with us. Come, O Heavenly Law-giver, we are ready to receive It; come, with all the power of Thine Arm, to deliver us from the death of sin and of Hell.

HOMAGE TO THE ADORABLE MOUTH OF JESUS IN
THE MANGER.

Divine and Infant Mouth of my Divine Saviour, Source of the most pure delights, sacred Lips upon which all grace is shed, which have spoken by the Prophets, and were formed by the HOLY GHOST, only that they might pronounce those oracles of wisdom and laws of holiness which form both the happiness and the security of those who hear and practise them, only that They might give proofs of the graciousness and loving-kindness of Thy Heart, and pronounce the merciful sentence of life and pardon to all who have recourse to Thee; I adore Thee in the womb of

Thy holy Mother, where Thou keepest unbroken silence, and in the Manger where Thou explainest Thyself but by Thine infant Cries. O Adorable Mouth, consecrate mine, that henceforth it may be occupied only with the Divine mercies of my Saviour. Render it worthy, O my God, to approach Thine with reverence and purity, and to say to Thee with like confidence as the Spouse in the sacred Canticles: "Let Him kiss me, with the kisses of His Mouth." Osculetur me, osculo oris sui. (Song Sol. i. 2.)

The Nineteenth Day of December.

DAY OF REMISSION.

PRACTICE.

THE remission of sins being the fruit, the end, and the necessary consequence of that repentance which John the Baptist preached with such power, as it presupposes that God is already appeased, begin the day by humbly imploring this remission in the words of the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive them which trespass against me." Often repeat this earnest petition, and make it thine ejaculatory prayer for to-day: but if thou wouldest have it accepted, accompany it, as often as thou repeatest it, with a feeling of sorrow and of detestation for thy sins, and with a hearty desire of obtaining their remission.

MEDITATION UPON THE REMISSION OF SINS.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

"And John Baptist came into all the country about

Jordan preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." (Luke iii. 3.)

This matchless Preacher was fully persuaded that men never more willingly undertake the hardest labours than when sure of being abundantly recompensed; and that a Christian who is led by faith, ought to submit himself to the severest and most difficult practices of penitence without wavering, having room to hope that they will be followed by the remission of his sins, if he do them sincerely and without self-sparing.

It was by this powerful motive that John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance to the Jews, a motive which ought to engage thee also to penitence, and make thee overcome all the obstacles which can arise from thy self-indulgence, from thy fearfulness, or thy respect of men, and assuredly wilt thou submit thyself thereto if thou desirest to secure thy salvation.

Say then to thyself, Sinner that I am, I have offended my God, I have incurred the loss of His Favour, His Hate, and His Indignation, I have cause to fear the most grievous of all privations, and the being shut out from Heaven; which in itself contains eternal torments. I am sure, through the saying of John Baptist, authentically confirmed afterwards by the word of CHRIST Himself, that if I repent, as He commandeth me, my sin will be remitted to me, and that the infinite blessings which will follow this remission will be my reconciliation with God, His Grace, His Love, deliverance from Hell, and the privilege of looking for His celestial Heritage, which will make me for ever happy in the possession of God.

Were I to refuse to repent after being urged by these motives, motives the strongest with which religion can furnish me, it would be an unpardonable

blindness and impenitence, and a sin against the HOLY GHOST : I could no longer reckon on my salvation ; the Sufferings even and the Death of Jesus by which I may now hope for remission, would become useless to me : and, alas ! what would then become of me !

SECOND PART.

It is important to observe that the baptism of St. John could not remit sins ; he could but promise this remission, and prepare his hearers for it by repentance, whilst waiting till JESUS CHRIST Himself should come to work out effectually this remission by His Sufferings and His Death. Thus the priests of the New Testament have more power than even this great Forerunner ; for being clothed with the authority of JESUS CHRIST Whom they represent, they have power to confer this remission, and to apply the Merits and the Blood of the Saviour. How powerful a motive for procuring for ourselves this great benefit ! Neglect it not.

To urge thee the more to this, reflect again upon the different names under which this remission is expressed in Holy Scripture. This Grace is called sometimes a pardon, with respect to the offence which sin commits against God, which is pardoned ; sometimes a healing, with regard to the mortal wound which sin inflicts upon the soul, which is healed by this all-powerful remedy ; sometimes a redemption, in respect of the shameful bondage which the sinner has incurred, from which he is set free and redeemed ; sometimes a baptism, with regard to the stains and spots of sin from which the soul is washed and cleansed ; sometimes an absolution, referring to the bonds and chains of sin, from which the sinner is delivered, that he may regain the liberty of the children of God ; sometimes an acquittance, a payment, as it

is expressed in the Lord's Prayer, with respect to the debts that the sinner has contracted, and from which he is acquitted ; sometimes it is said by the Prophet that sins are covered, in that the soul is herein clothed anew with the robe of grace and righteousness, of which it had been despoiled and stripped : finally, a remission, according to the Divine Forerunner, referring to the punishment which the sinner has incurred, and which the Justice and the Goodness of God remits. Study these expressions, which are from the HOLY SPIRIT, and use every means for obtaining this remission, through the virtue of Penitence and the sacramental power of Absolution⁵.

AFFECTIONS.

Let me employ, O my Adorable Saviour, those same expressions which Thou didst dictate to Thy sacred Writers, that I may obtain from Thy Divine Mercy the remission of my sins, trusting that Thou wilt hearken to them with more pleasure than to mere words of mine, and that Thou wilt more graciously vouchsafe my requests, granting me that remission of my sins which Thou hast obtained for me by Thy Blood, and which Thou commandest me to ask of Thee daily.

O Lord, with a heart penetrated with sorrow, I humbly ask pardon of Thee, for I have offended Thee by transgressing Thy holy Laws ; I ask healing of Thee, as of the true Physician of my soul, which hath inflicted on herself as many wounds as she hath committed sins. Ransom me anew, O Divine Deliverer, and renew for my sake the redemption which Thou didst begin in the Cradle and didst

⁵ " Par la vertu et par la Sacrement de Pénitence." The word " sacramental" is adopted from Hooker. See before on the " Foundation of the Spiritual Life," p. 228.

consummate upon the Cross, for my sin hath made me fall under the most shameful of all bondage ; absolve me, unloose me, break the chains which hold my soul captive, and restore me the liberty which I have lost by my sin : be my Surety ; pay for me, for, alas ! I confess myself utterly destitute ; and as Thou art my Saviour, a single drop of Thy Blood can acquit me of all I owe Thy Justice : cover my sins, hide them, if it be possible, from Thine Own Eyes : reclothe me, for I am naked, and my sin hath wholly stripped me, and cover me with the precious Garments of Grace and Righteousness.

Finally, I implore of Thee that full remission which, in the language of Thy Messenger, is the fruit of the baptism of repentance : confer upon me that baptism ; inspire me with it ; accept repentance for the remission of my sins ; if repentance be in part the work of my hands, I desire to perform it without sparing myself ; and from this present moment ; but as remission is the work of Thy Mercy only, I seek it from Thee with a humble and a contrite heart.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON THE REMISSION OF SINS.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered. (Ps. xxxii. 1.)

I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. (Ibid. 5.)

The remission of sin giveth not license to sin ; and when any fall back again, remission is obtained more hardly. (S. Leo, Ep. 97.)

JESUS CHRIST was crucified, that He might shed His Blood for the remission of sins, by which Passion of His Only-Begotten the Grace of God is extolled,

that none should glory in man. (S. Aug. Tract 98. in Joan. § 2.)

TWENTY-THIRD POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

HOLINESS LADEN WITH SINS.

Never was there a more authentic proof, nor a more solemn and sacred praise of the Holiness of God, than that which we derive from the lips of the Celestial Spirits ; they furnish its proof, not only upon earth, but even in Heaven ; the Seraphim nearest the Throne above, unceasingly sing the praise of this Holiness, and eternally will sing it, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy : the Heavenly Jerusalem echoes with this sacred Hymn, and its harmony, surpassing ten thousand times the sweetness and delight of all which we can hear, forms the joy of all the Blessed. Verily God is Holy, for He is Immutable in the highest Good, which is Himself ; so that if He could sin, He were no longer God : He is Holy, He is the Holy of Holies, He is Holiness Itself, the source of all Holiness : the infinite Love which He necessarily beareth to Himself, the infinite Hate He hath of sin, which He hateth in one sense as much as He loveth Himself, are certain proofs of this.

But how can we reconcile this infinite hate of sin with that love of the sinner which has induced this holy God to take upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh, to die for the sinner, and to lade Himself with his sins, so as to bear their punishment, in order to satisfy the Justice of God in his place, as if He were Himself a transgressor ?

This could only be effected by a miracle of His Love ; He cometh to be born among sinners, and for sinners : He suffereth their contumelies even in His Birth, by the inhumanity of the inhabitants of Bethlehem ; scarcely is He in the world, than He weepeth

in a stable, and in a poor manger, of which He endureth all the inconveniences ; His Tears ascend even to the Throne of God His Father, in order to soften His Anger ; He familiarizeth Himself afterwards and eateth with sinners that He might convert them : He suffereth the reproaches which this exceeding charity bringeth upon Him ; He endureth a multitude of revilings, imprisonment, and death ; He dieth between two malefactors, and He is Himself numbered among the transgressors. Behold the Holy of Holies laden with our sins, because He loveth us ; let us not lay still more upon Him, let us adore His Holiness, let us acknowledge His gracious Love, and let us outrage it no more.

PARAPHRASE UPON THE ANTIPHONE

“ O RADIX JESSE.”

O Root of Jesse, who art placed for a sign of the people, before whom kings shall shut their mouths, whom the Gentiles shall supplicate ; come Thou to deliver us, do not tarry. (Is. xi. 10 ; lli. 15. Hab. ii. 3.)

O worthy Root of Jesse, only Son of an Almighty God, Who hast graciously willed to become the Son of David according to the flesh, to save mankind by the outpouring of Thy Blood, be now indeed as a glorious Standard, to reassemble those who live in miserable separation, in fearful disorder and blindness ; make Thyself their Leader, that Thou mayest guide them as a King ; come to establish an eternal power here, and reign over the whole earth as the Sovereign and the Prince of peace. May all kings become Thy subjects, and before Thee may they keep silence in humble reverence ; may all Gentiles submit to Thy Laws, and address themselves henceforth to Thee for mercies. Come quickly to deliver

us, delay not to come and break our chains, and to procure for us the glorious liberty of the children of God.

HOMAGE TO THE SACRED HANDS OF JESUS IN THE
CRADLE.

Is it an Almighty God Whom I approach to adore? Those feeble Hands I see, are they those of God Who hath made all things out of nothing? of God Who so well knows how to cast forth the thunder and the thunderbolts, that He may hurl them upon the guilty heads of His enemies? of a Sovereign, Whose Hands are the disposers of sceptres and of crowns, and have power to overthrow them when it pleaseth Him? Yes, O LORD, Thy Hands, weak in appearance, which I see now enveloped in swaddling-clothes, and now spread out upon Thy Cradle, are able, if Thou wilt, to overthrow Heaven and earth: but they are weak like those of other children, because it is Thy Will, and for my sake. O infant Hands, O sacred Hands, Dispensers of all the treasures of grace and of glory, I adore You, but grant me all the help I need in order to assure my salvation.

The Twentieth Day of December.

DAY OF REFORMATION.

PRACTICE.

As a day consecrated to reformation requireth great attention, begin the day by a serious examination of what thou hast to reform; beg the HOLY SPIRIT for light truly to know thyself, and for courage to undertake the great work of thine own amendment;

watch over every thing, neglect nothing ; thoroughly study thy disposition, thy temper, thine inclinations, and the manner in which thou livest with God, with thy neighbour, and with thyself ; finish the day by the same examination ; remember what thou hast remarked to be amended, and make a resolution daily to labour at self-reformation.

MEDITATION UPON REFORMATION.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

“ Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.” (Luke iii. 4.)

Great pains are taken to smooth the road by which some mighty Prince is known to be about to pass ; its rough places are made plain, its heights are brought low, its cavities are filled up, its stones are taken away : JESUS CHRIST, the King of kings, was ready to appear in Galilee, when John Baptist acquitted himself of this duty, by preaching to the people to “ make straight the paths,” by the reformation of their lives.

This Same JESUS is about to be born ; not content with being born in a Stable, He wills to be born again in our minds, that He may enlighten them with His Light, and in our hearts that He may purify them and inflame them by that Fire which He cometh to kindle upon earth, even the Fire of His Divine Love.

Carefully, then, “ prepare the way,” by earnestly striving to reform these two powers, that so He may come to consecrate them by His Visitation, by His Presence, and by His Indwelling. In our mind there is but too much to amend ; its ignorance of its duties and of Divine things, its curiosity for things of earth, its infatuation, its prepossessions, its prejudices,

its obstinacy, its want of reflection upon its own faults, whilst occupied only with those of others; its vain and useless thoughts, and its sloth in applying itself to eternal truths; its haughtiness, its pride, and its duplicity, which may well be called the "mountains and hills," which must "be brought low" and humbled, in order "to prepare the way of the LORD."

In our heart also there is but too much to reform: its insensibility towards God, and its exceeding love of self; its ruling passion; its perverse and ill-ordered inclinations; its attachments to the creature and to things perishable; its indifference and hardness of heart towards those who suffer; its rebellions against grace; its listlessness in serving God, and in performing its religious duties; its self-indulgences, and its zeal for pleasure: such are the "crooked and rough ways" which must be amended, if we would that God should come unto us.

SECOND PART.

In vain is it to feel touched with the sharpest and most sorrowful feelings of penitence, or even at first to embrace it zealously; for "where there is no amendment," says Tertullian⁶, "repentance is of necessity vain;" and this amendment is not complete if, after having striven to reform the mind and the heart, we amend not the exterior also.

JESUS CHRIST came on earth to work out the amendment of the whole man, and He began this Work even from the Cradle, reforming covetousness by His Own extreme Poverty, pride by His Own most deep Humility, and self-indulgence by His Own most strict Austerity; but He wills also that man should strive together with Him, that he should

⁶ De Pœnit. c. 2.

sketch this reformation of himself, and should deeply study it, in order that He Himself may put His Seal upon it, and may make him worthy of His abiding within him.

Thou awaitest this same Saviour, said St. John Chrysostom (Hom. ii.), but that thou mayest draw Him towards thee, and become worthy of the graces attached to His Nativity, amend both thine inward and thine outward faculties; reform the looks of thine eyes, and let Christian wisdom regulate thine every glance; reform the words of thy mouth by prudence and by charity; the gestures of thy whole body by modesty; thy whole demeanour by that circumspection and gravity which denotes that thou walkest in the Presence of God; thy countenance by a look of courteous and Christian gentleness; the intemperance of thy mouth and thy sensuality by mortification; thine ears by ever closing them against detractions, and all which offendeth modesty; thy hands by working for God and for thy neighbour; finally, even thy garments by simplicity.

Here, then, is a subject for extended examination; if thou makest it truly and without self-flattery, thou wilt find much more to do than thou imaginedst; but fear not, grace will aid thee to accomplish this reformation, and will sweeten its toil.

AFFECTIONS.

How weak do I feel, O my Adorable Saviour, when I think of beginning the reformation of my whole self! and yet of this I feel my extreme need, if I would become worthy to have Thee born again within me. The infinite number of faults I have to amend affrights me; the difficulty of the undertaking discourages me; my sloth and cowardice start back, alarmed on the one side, not willing to endure the restraint which must needs be laid upon myself;

whilst my conscience, on the other, is crying out, reproaching me incessantly with my weakness, and threatening me with Thy fearful Judgments if I labour not to amend; and I silence them only by delaying this great work from day to day, by promising myself to undertake it at some time still future.

Thus do I try to delude my conscience, and to stifle its voice and its reproaches by these feeble promises, and by these procrastinations and delays, which are but the cowardly fruits of my own self-love: but oh! in vain; for her voice is Thine, and she ceases not to cry aloud in the ears of my heart, though without any other success than the disquieting of my soul.

Help me, then, O God of Might and Goodness! I "confess my wickedness" before Thee, with the Prophet; but make me to hear, like that repentant king, that Thou hast granted me the remission of mine iniquity. From this moment, by the help of Thy grace, am I then going to strive to amend, and to become "a new creature" in Thee and by Thee; hearken to my most humble prayer; enlighten me, guide me, strengthen me, form me Thyself anew; O Divine Redeemer, Thou Who didst come upon earth in order to reform mankind by the excellent and Divine Example Thou bringest before them in the Cradle, even Thine Own Self, reform the pride of my mind by the Humility Thou there wilt practise, in descending from Thy Throne of Glory, in order to espouse my lowliness and nothingness; reform my heart, and, above all, its inclination for pleasure, by the exceeding Severities Thou wilt there endure for my instruction, for my sake, and in order to engage me to undertake the labour of a total reformation.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON AMENDMENT.

Be not conformed to this world : but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. (Rom. xii. 2.)

If any man be in CHRIST, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God. (2 Cor. v. 17, 18.)

Where there is no amendment, repentance is of necessity vain. (Tert. de Pœnit. c. 2.)

None can become the friend of God without having laboured to amend himself. (S. Aug. de Genes.)

TWENTY-FOURTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

ETERNITY MADE SUBJECT TO TIME.

• God Only is eternal with perfect eternity, because He is without beginning and without end, and is Himself the Fount and the Beginning of His Eternity ; it is to speak improperly of the Supreme Being, say the holy Fathers, to say He hath been and He will be : but only should we say, He is, because He enjoyeth through His Eternity an everlasting present. There is nothing past and nothing future with the LORD, because all is present with Him, as well that which happened at the beginning as that which will come to pass at the consummation of all ages. To Him Alone, then, can be attributed that praise pronounced by the royal prophet : the LORD endureth for ever and ever. (Ps. ciii. 17.)

But what exceeding love for man in this eternal God to come forth, if we may so speak, from His eternity, which is His glory, in order to subject Himself to time, which He hath Himself created, and

which is but a measure of movements which have an end, composed of ages, of years, of days, of hours, and of rapid moments, which bring man of necessity to the grave ! This eternal God, a pure Spirit, the Creator of all the Heavenly Host,—to whom He hath imparted, not His perfect Eternity, which hath neither beginning nor end, and which He can communicate to none, but His immortality,—is come down, in one sense, by humility and by love, from the fulness of His Eternity in the fulness of time, says the Gospel, that He may take a body like ours, one which beareth within itself the principle of its own destruction, through the contrary elements of which it is composed.

This gracious God hath made Himself subject to the times and the moments marked out in His eternal decrees for the redemption of mankind, and to those times and those moments which were the most grievous, and appeared to be the most mortifying and the most opposed to His Independence, to His Greatness, and to the unalterable Happiness which He enjoyed ; and this voluntary subjection is one incomprehensible miracle of His infinite Love for man. He subjected Himself, at His Nativity, to the most severe season ; and this sovereign Creator and LORD of all time, when His Death was drawing near, said, in graciousness and humility, that His "hour was come : " *Sciens JESUS quia venit hora Ejus.* How deep, how impenetrable a mystery ! could there be an hour marked in all time which could subject an eternal God to death ? Yes, but He it is Himself Who by His Own Will marked it out for Himself, subjecting Himself to time, eternal as He is, but in order to procure for us a blessed immortality. This is a great subject for reflection and for thanksgiving, it is for us to profit by this inestimable benefit, and to make a holy use of that precious

time which He hath obtained for us by His Blood, in order that we should acquire a happy eternity.

PARAPHRASE UPON THE ANTIPHONE

“O CLAVIS DAVID.”

“O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel, who openest and none shutteth, who shuttest and none openeth, come Thou, and bring forth the captive from the house of bondage, who sitteth in darkness and in the shadow of death.” (Is. xxii. 22 ; xlii. 7.)

O mystic Key of David, and ruling Sceptre of the house of Israel ! Key of blessing to the elect, which opens that Heaven to them which none shall shut against them, when they have been faithful to grace even until death ; but key of sorrow to the damned ! which shutteth against them the gate of Heaven, which none shall open to them ; come quickly to break our chains, and to deliver us from the hard captivity which makes us groan. Alas ! we are at the same time both criminals and captives ; we are the forgers of our own chains, for they are chains of sin ; come, then, O blessed Key, and free us from them ; come quickly to open our prison doors, and to procure for us that blessed liberty of the children of God for which we have sighed so long : come, LORD, to shed Thy dawning, albeit ever eternal, Light upon the thick darkness which surroundeth us, that Thou mayest make us worthy to see the “Day” of Divine Truths, of which Thou art the Adorable “Spring.”

HOMAGE TO THE ADORABLE EYES OF JESUS IN
THE MANGER.

Thine Eyes shed Tears, O Divine Babe ; is it not through a feeling of humility, and because Thou wiltest to be conformed to other children who weep when born ? Is it not pain also which causeth Thee

to shed them, because Thou art in an uncovered shed, and the severity of the season maketh Thee suffer? But is it not through a feeling of love and of tenderness, and because my miseries touch Thy Heart?

But, O Adorable Babe! I greatly fear lest rather it be a sad foreboding of my unfaithfulness and of mine ingratitude, which draweth them from Thine Eyes.

O precious Tears of my JESUS, flow on, yea, flow onwards even unto Heaven, reach even to the Heart of the Father of Heaven, that ye may extinguish the fire of His Wrath too justly enkindled against me; descend even to Hell, that ye may there extinguish the devouring flames which I have deserved: but, above all, come and sprinkle our hearts, that ye may banish all dryness thence, may soften their hardness, may wash them, may purify them, may make them bring forth good fruit an hundred fold: come, lastly, that ye may consecrate them, may kindle them, and may unite them inseparably to the sacred Heart of JESUS.

The Twenty-First Day of December.

DAY OF PREPARATION.

PRACTICE.

AFTER having made the more distant preparation for the Nativity of JESUS during the preceding days, enter to-day upon a nearer preparation, for this happy day draweth nigh, lest it should come upon thee unawares: imagine thou hearest the mighty and echoing voice of John the Baptist, crying in the ears of thy heart: "Prepare ye the way of the LORD;" leave him not but to join thyself in spirit to the

society of Joseph and of Mary, who are journeying (as at this time) from Nazareth to Bethlehem ; follow them to the Stable, lose not sight of them, nor of the wondrous mysteries which are about to take place there, and look upon It as the Centre to which all thine actions to-day are to be directed.

MEDITATION UPON PREPARATION FOR THE
BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

“ Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make His Paths straight.” (Luke iii. 4.)

This “ way ” is that by which God cometh to us, and by which we go to Him : thus the glory of God and our own good alike require us to “ prepare ” it ; attentively consider also that we go to God, and that God cometh to us by the way of the mind, and by that of the heart ; we need a docile, submissive, and faithful mind, and a heart detached from the world, and attached to Him by sincere love ; let us then prepare the mind and the heart.

As it is the mind which thinks, which examines, which knows, it ought to use every means to prepare itself aright. Think then seriously Who it is That cometh unto Thee : it is God, yea, God Almighty, Whose NAME Alone maketh earth and hell to quake ; it is GOD the Creator Who brought thee out of nothing, and Who hath given thee life and all thou hast, and all thou art ; that GOD Who, adored by the Angels in Heaven, upon the throne of His Majesty, cometh down from thence through love, that He may clothe Himself with thy flesh, that He may be born in a miserable shed, that He may suffer, that He may die upon a Cross, and that He may open Heaven to thee, because He loveth thee : what a subject for re-

flection, and what an all-powerful motive for preparing thyself to receive Him rightly.

Examine seriously what this Saving God demands of thee for this end ; it is to enter into thyself, to seek out and to cast away all which could be displeasing in His Sight, and to regulate thy preparation by His Own ; study It, and take It as thy pattern ; He cometh with deep humility, He Who is Greatness Itself ; and thou art proud, thou who art nothing ; He cometh to be born, to live, and to die in extreme poverty, and thou seekest superfluities : He cometh to suffer, and thou art sensual, and the least mortification affrights thee : this is what thou must cast away ; think hereon, for the day draweth nigh ; “ watch ” herein, for thou art at the “ gate ; ” “ wait ” for Him, according to the counsel of the wise man, and thou wilt find this Saving God, and “ in finding ” Him thou wilt “ find life.” (Prov. viii. 34, 35.)

SECOND PART.

“ Prepare your hearts unto the LORD,” said the Prophet Samuel to the Israelites, when they were about to receive the Ark of the Covenant, and they did prepare themselves. (1 Sam. vii. 3.) With how much greater reason ought we to prepare our hearts for receiving Him of Whom this Ark was but the shadow and the figure ! That Ark was but of wood, and contained but the tables of the Law, the rod of Moses, and the manna. The Living Ark of the New Covenant, Which is JESUS CHRIST, hath been formed by the HOLY GHOST, of a flesh human at once and Deified¹ ; It containeth and It is a heavenly Manna which nourisheth the soul ; It is the Living Law, and It possesseth all the fulness of the Godhead.

¹ Deificata, θεοποιηθεῖσα, S. Ath., S. Cyr. Al. &c. See Petav. de Incarn. iv. 9. “ Une chair humaine et divine tout ensemble.” Orig. [Ed.]

But what ought our heart to do in order to prepare itself for Him? Purify itself, detach itself, love and desire: purify itself by penitence, and leave nothing impure therein which might offend the eyes of JESUS CHRIST, Who is purity itself: detach itself from all it loves to the prejudice of its duties, for fear this Saviour may find therein some hidden idol dividing the worship which is due to Him, or some secret rival disputing its entrance and its complete possession with Him; the heart ought to love Him only and ardently, who cometh to it through love, and that He may teach it truly to love that which it ought to love. Finally, it ought to desire Him Who is called above all "the Desired of all nations;" if it love Him it will desire Him, and in desiring Him it will possess Him.

Purify, then, thy heart, detach it from the creature, love JESUS with all thy heart, that spouse of thy soul who hath "first loved" thee, and think with trembling of that which He Himself hath said, that among the Virgins themselves, they only who were ready were admitted to the wedding feast, and that the others were rejected with wrath.

AFFECTIONS.

O that I might be able to say to Thee, my Divine Saviour, with as much confidence and truth as did the kingly prophet: My God, my heart is prepared, my heart is prepared. *Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum* (Ps. lvii. 7); there remains only in order to finish my preparation, that I should sing Thy praise, and rejoice myself in Thee Alone, and taste with delight the prize and the joy of Thy possession.

But yet, when I examine myself closely in Thy Divine presence, O my God, alas! how much room have I for being confounded, and how many faults

do I perceive in the ways and in the paths of my mind and of my heart which need to be reformed in order to be made worthy to possess Thee; how many wastes and valleys to be filled up, how many stones of stumbling to be taken away, how many impurities to cleanse, how many petty hills to be cast down, how many heights to be brought low, how many rough places to be smoothed, how much pride, how much self-love, how much lukewarmness, how many secret infidelities!

O LORD! with what confidence can I approach to visit Thee in the manger with these faults, and with a multitude of others which are hidden from my self-love? And couldst Thou draw near to me to grant me the graces which I would ask of Thee? I dare not hope it. What, then, must I do, O my God? Alas! I feel, indeed, that I must without delay employ every means to induce Thee to shed upon my soul the graces which are attached to Thy temporal birth in the stable of Bethlehem, and to Thy spiritual birth in my soul: I have a sure hope that when I shall have used every effort to prepare for both, I shall be able to say with the holy and repentant king—Thou preparest their heart, and Thine ear hearkeneth thereto (Ps. x. 19.) *Præparationem cordis eorum audivit auris tua.*

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

ON PREPARATION.

Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, the LORD, the God of Hosts, is His name. (Amos iv. 12, 13.)

They that fear the LORD will prepare their hearts, and humble their souls in His sight. (Ecclus. ii. 17.)

"Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it," saith the LORD. Thou art narrowed in thyself through the

strange god set up in thy heart ; break the vain idol, cast out of thy conscience the molten image, and open thy mouth wide by confession, by love, and I will fill it, for with Me is the well of life. (S. Aug. de Psal. lxxx. 11.)

God heareth not only our prayers, when made with faith and fervour, but He heareth even the preparation of our heart to make them. (S. Chrys. Hom. 23.)

TWENTY-FIFTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

A PRIEST THE VICTIM.

Although CHRIST came upon earth but "in the fulness of time," yet was He "a Priest for ever," as the Prophet said ; and in Him was the spring and principle of the priesthood of all Priests, whether of the old or new covenant : His was an awfully high and sacred function, of which the priesthood of Melchisedek was but a shadow and type, and one with which the uncreated God had willed to clothe Himself for our sakes, in order to fulfil the office of Saviour of mankind, an office which He hath amply exercised on our behalf towards His heavenly Father, that He might reconcile us to Him, by offering Him for us and in our stead, at one time sacrifices of praise, then sacrifices of thanksgiving ; again, sacrifices of expiation, crowning all by that of His whole Self, by dying upon the Cross, that He might translate us from the awful tribunal of His justice to that of His mercy.

But oh ! wondrous miracle of His love ! This Eternal Priest becomes a victim, and our victim, and He will offer Himself up upon the Cross for our sins ; He appears to renounce the right He has through His Divine Nature of receiving sacrifices with His Heavenly Father, in order to become a Sacrifice Himself ; He wills to furnish in Himself alone the material for an entire and complete Sacrifice, by espousing the humble office of victim for our sakes, by uniting

it through an unheard-of miracle to His sacrifice: He offers this sacrifice, and the victim He offers is Himself; thus the eternal Father finds in this well-beloved Son a God, a priest, and an offering. What powerful motives are these, engaging us to love Him, and to offer ourselves to Him in sacrifice, as obedient victims ever ready to die for His glory.

The sacrifices of the Old Testament being incapable of remitting sins, or of appeasing the wrath of God, JESUS CHRIST came to supply this default, and the Apostle Paul puts these words into His mouth when entering the world: "LORD, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin: in them Thou hast had no pleasure, but a body hast Thou prepared for Me. Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 4—7.) He began to fulfil the office of a victim even from His mother's womb; He hath continued it in the cradle, and completed it upon Calvary, by pouring out His Blood as a whole burnt-offering for our sins. (Matt. i. 21.)

PARAPHRASE UPON THE ANTIPHONE

"O ORIENS."

"O Rising Brightness of the Everlasting Light, and Sun of Righteousness, come Thou and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." (Luke i. 78, 79. Mal. iv. 2.)

O Day-spring, Fount of all lights, since Thou hast been begotten of Thy Heavenly Father from all eternity; Thou' Who art the brightness of the saints arising daily in their hearts; Which bringest unto souls the light of eternal truth, in order to enlighten them in the paths of salvation: Sun of Righteousness, a thousand times more bright than that of nature, which shineth but by Thine illumination, and which without

⁷ Altered slightly, as the expression seemed confused. [Ep.]

Thee would be but darkness. Alas! we are ourselves in darkness and the shadow of death: come to lighten us, we sigh after Thee; come to clothe Thyself with our flesh, come to converse amongst us, come to open the eyes of our souls, come to make Thyself known to us, come to make us known to ourselves, that so we may love Thee, and hate ourselves: come to dispel our darkness, and deliver us from death, since Thou art the Fount of light, and the Author of the life of grace and glory.

HOMAGE TO THE SACRED FEET OF JESUS IN THE
MANGER.

O sacred Feet of mine infant JESUS! of my King, my Saviour, and my God, I adore you, and I should count myself indeed happy might I kiss you reverently with my lips. Although ye appear in exceeding weakness, and are wrapped about with mean swaddling clothes, yet I adore beforehand the precious and sacred footsteps which ye will print upon the earth; still more blessed were I, if, whilst adoring them with lowly reverence and lively faith, I might ever follow them unswervingly, since they would ever trace for me the road which leads to glory.

O infant feet of mine adorable Saviour! ye are soon about to sustain the Body of that God Who alone upholdeth heaven and earth; ye are about to bear Him to the conquest of those souls which He will redeem with His most precious blood. But, alas! my heart is pierced with grief when I think that when those infant Feet shall have acquired their proper size, they will be transfixed to a cross, pierced with nails, and cruelly torn, since they will sustain the whole weight of the Body of my dying SAVIOUR, and that from them will flow a river of blood, which will bedew the Cross to which they will be transfixed, and Calvary, for my sake.

The Twenty-Second Day of December.

DAY OF ZEAL.

PRACTICE.

BEGIN the day by thanking the LORD for the zeal He hath had hitherto for the salvation of thy soul, for that divine zeal which proceeds from His exceeding love, and implore Him with all thy heart to continue it to thee, and to pardon thee for having so little profited by it; lay open before Him the just fear thou hast, lest this zeal and divine jealousy should cease concerning thee, as He hath threatened those sinners who have not given themselves up to the solicitations of His grace. Respond to this zeal of God by thine for His glory, for thine own and thy neighbour's salvation; renew this practice often, and neglect no opportunity to-day of giving Him proofs of it.

MEDITATION UPON ZEAL.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare ye the way of the LORD." (Luke iii. 4.)

Be not weary of hearing the voice of this great preacher, let no word of his fall to the ground, if thou wouldest prepare the way of the LORD, and become worthy of thy redemption which draweth near: so fervent and zealous is he for the salvation of souls, that when asked what he is, he forgets that he is a man, and says only that he is a "voice," speaking, preaching, thundering, and crying in the wilderness: *Ego vox clamantis in deserto.*

Profit by his zeal, regulate thine own by his, and like him have God, thyself, and thy neighbour, as

the object of thy zeal, and thy zeal will then be perfect.

The glory of God is the first motive of his actions ; the first spring which puts him in motion, and which transports him ; he desires to make Him known, to cause Him to be adored, and to be loved, and he acts and he speaks only for His glory : verily zeal is nothing but an intense love, which, no longer able to contain itself within the narrow limits of the heart wherein it is enclosed, sheds itself abroad in order to make others love that God Whom it loves so ardently itself ; without this love, zeal is but a plausible illusion, a burst of temper and of disposition, a disguised but real anger, a passion sanctified under the semblance of religion, and the effect of a secret pride hidden under specious pretexts.

A man truly zealous has himself too as an object ; and he begins by labouring at his own sanctification. John Baptist withdraws from the world ; he does penance, he subdues his body by fasts, in order to subject it to the spirit ; and JESUS CHRIST said of him, that he neither ate nor drank. Such is the basis of true zeal. Finally, he loves his neighbour ; he helps him ; he employs every means for procuring his salvation, without any other view, and without any other interest : it is charity alone which quickens him, which makes him speak, which makes him act, and which hurries him forwards : here then is an excellent example ; strive to resemble him.

SECOND PART.

Think not that this zeal is a virtue reserved only for apostolic men ; it is proper for all Christians, who have all the same God to love and to glorify, each one according to his condition and his opportunities. I acknowledge that it is a much more indispensable precept for those whom God hath called to the guid-

ance of souls ; I know that it forms the most glorious and the most shining ornament of the ministers of religion, and that they are enlisted by their high profession to labour for the glory of God, for the growth of religion, and for the salvation of souls.

But there is a zeal becoming the heads of families, that they may bring, first by their good example, and then by their words and exhortations, those who are subject to them to fulfil all their duties of justice and of religion : to instruct them, or to have them instructed ; to watch over their conduct, to prevent irregularity creeping in amongst them ; to correct and repress all disorders with vigilance, energy, and sweetness : and he who hath not this zeal for his children, and for the least of his servants, is, in the opinion of the great Apostle, " worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v. 8.)

There is a zeal proper for private persons ; for as all are obliged to love God with their whole hearts, so are all obliged to be zealous for His glory, to declare themselves for Him wherever they may be ; to allow nothing which dishonoureth Him ; to sustain His interests, His worship, His religion ; to procure the salvation of their brethren, whom they ought to love for the love of God, to raise them when they fall, and to correct them when they wander from their duty ; and this zeal ought to be warm, without ever slackening, discreet without anger or bitterness, and pure without mixture of caprice, of interest, of human respect, or of vanity. Examine thy zeal by this description, and strive to amend all its defects.

AFFECTIONS.

I adore, O Almighty God, that divine zeal which Thou hast for Thine own glory ; a zeal which proceedeth from the infinite love Thou bearest to Thyself, and which Thou alone hast the right to bear

Thyself, because Thou art infinitely worthy of love, and Thou knowest and lovest Thine infinite Perfections.

I adore, O my Saviour, the loving zeal Thou bearest me, without my having deserved it: Thine Incarnation, Thy Labours, Thy Sufferings, and Thy Death, are genuine proofs of it, whose memory I ought to engrave upon my soul in ineffaceable characters; withdraw not, O Lord, either that love, or that zeal, or that divine jealousy from me, for this would be for me the greatest of all ills.

Far rather kindle within my heart an ardent zeal for Thy glory and for the salvation of my neighbour. This love will be quickly enkindled within me if I have a perfect love for Thee, for from thence it springs: but the love of Thee is also a grace; I ask it of Thee, O LORD; for, alas! I know and feel but too well that, without Thee I cannot love Thee; not unless Thou shed abroad in my heart, by Thy HOLY SPIRIT, that divine charity which may bear me first towards Thee, as towards an object supremely lovely, and which I ought to love with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength; secondly, towards my neighbour, whom Thou willest that I should love for Thy sake, as being, like myself, Thine image, and the price of Thy Blood; I will receive this favour, and I will respond to it with all the faithfulness which Thou requirest of me, that so I may obtain all the graces attached to Thy temporal Birth, and love Thee eternally in Heaven.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON ZEAL.

I have been very jealous for the LORD GOD of hosts. (1 Kings xix. 10.)

The zeal of Thine House hath eaten me up ; and the reproaches of them that reproached Thee are fallen upon me. (Ps. lxi. 9.)

The zeal of God is gold tried in the fire ; it is the glow of faith, the fervour of devotion, which melteth and maketh of our souls a delightful aliment for JESUS CHRIST. (S. Ambr. in Ps. 118. s. 10. v. 14.)

Behold the proper order of zeal for the honour of God ; it should begin by the examination of self, the chiding of self, the correction of self, and then of its neighbour. (Laur. Justin. de vita solit.)

TWENTY-SIXTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

GOD MADE MAN.

GOD and man ! alas ! how infinitely distant ! where can words be found to express it, seeing that it is incomprehensible ? But this same God is united to man, and by the strongest and most intimate of all imaginable unions ; for it is hypostatic, and the two natures are united in one person, in Him Who is the Son of God. Verily, the most wondrous, the most astounding miracle of the Almighty Mercy of God was needed to bring near this infinite distance, and to form this amazing union ; and that God should take all that was in man, and man all that was in God ! That the eternal God should become a man subject to death ; that God, Who is a pure Spirit, should become a man of flesh, and subject to corruption ; that God Almighty should become a man, who is weakness itself ; that Greatness should unite with lowliness ; Light with darkness ; Immensity with the tiny body of an infant ; finally, the supreme BEING, the Source, the Beginning, the Creator of all beings, with nothingness : how wondrous an union !

What is God ? HE is a supreme BEING, subsisting by Himself, without dependence, and on Whom

all things depend : eternal, without beginning and without end ; immutable, and incapable of change ; a pure Spirit, simple and without composition, without mixture, without division, without corruption, and without motion, although He moveth all things ; everywhere present by His immensity ; piercing all things, filling all things ; sole and only Creator of Heaven and of earth, of angels and of men, and of all which is contained in this vast universe ; the absolute Master of all, whose Adorable will nothing can resist ; supremely happy in Himself, and by Himself, and forming the joy and bliss of all the blessed : alone having right to love Himself, and to inhabit His own greatness with boundless complacency. Behold, not a definition of God, Who is above all definitions, but a feeble idea of that Adorable BEING, Who hath humbled Himself to be made man for the salvation of man whom He loved.

What is man, exclaimed the holy Job, that Thou shouldest magnify him ? and that Thou shouldest set Thine heart upon him ? (Job vii. 17.) He is a creature subject to mortality, whom Thou hast taken from the dust of the earth ; more weak than the reed, says St. Augustine, more fragile than glass, lighter than wind, and more changeful than the moon. Man is, verily, wholly dependent ; subject to corruption, to sickness, to sufferings, and to death.

What vileness, what misery, on one side ! What Greatness on the other ! Nevertheless, this greatness comes to unite itself by the Incarnation to this lowliness : truly, this is subject for wonder ! truly this is a motive for love !

PARAPHRASE UPON THE ANTIPHONE

“O REX GENTIUM.”

“O King and the Desire of all nations, and Chief Corner Stone, Who makest two to be one, come Thou

and save man whom Thou formedst from the clay." (Hag. ii. 7. Is. xxviii. 16. Eph. ii. 14.)

O King of nations ! King of kings, sovereign Lord of heaven and of earth ; King beloved of all the peoples who have the bliss of living beneath Thy Laws, and Who art alone their joy, their glory, and their delight ; Chief Corner Stone, upon which the whole edifice of the Church is to be built, and against which the gates of Hell will never prevail ; Almighty Lord, Who Alone canst replace the most contrary things in one centre of unity, and Who, of the different people of the two covenants, art about to make but one, that they may live in the same faith, and the same love, and become joint inheritors of Thine eternal kingdom ; come quickly to work out this great miracle ; come to save man whom Thou didst form from the dust of the earth, and yet didst honour with Thine own Image ; that so Thou mayest re-establish a perfect love in a perfect likeness.

HOMAGE TO THE ADORABLE FLESH OF JESUS CHRIST
IN THE MANGER.

O Adorable Flesh of my Jesus, chaste production of God a pure Spirit, and of a Virgin made^s more pure than Angels ; Flesh human at once and Deified^s ; human, because like ours ; Divine, because the fullness of the Divinity inhabiteth therein ; I adore Thee with my whole heart, and I offer to Thee my most humble and most loving homage.

I adore Thee within the sacred womb of Thy holy Mother, where Thou wast formed from her most pure blood, through the ineffable operation of the HOLY GHOST, and where Thou hast been inclosed during the space of nine months for my sake. I adore Thee in the stable and in the manger, where

^s Plus pure que. See above p. 49. & 132, note.

^s See page 178.

Thou sufferest the hardships of cold, that Thou mightest save me from the sufferings I have deserved. Thou art about to "grow in stature" through the nourishment Thou wilt receive from a Virgin Mother, and I sigh for the time of Thy manhood, that my blessedness may be hastened; but I fear it also, for when Thou shalt have attained Thy full greatness, Thou wilt be pierced and torn for my sins.

O Adorable and Virgin Flesh of my JESUS, purify, consecrate mine; "preserve" it from all corruption, that so it may rise again glorious and incorruptible.

The Twenty-Third Day of December.

DAY OF SECLUSION.

PRACTICE.

FEEL to-day in thy seclusion as thou shouldest feel, the approach of thy redemption, and of the Birth of thy Deliverer; think much, desire much, speak little, except to JESUS, now ready to come forth from the sacred womb of Mary, where He hath now been nine months enclosed; think of the interior occupations of that Divine Solitary; avoid useless conversations; separate thyself from the society and the tumult of the world, where thou wilt not find JESUS; retire even from that of thy friends, yea, though they be saints; occupy thyself in thy retirement by meditation; speak to GOD, hearken to GOD, and make thy nearer preparation for the approaching festival in silence, that so thou mayest give a new birth to JESUS in thy heart.

MEDITATION UPON SECLUSION.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."
(Luke iii. 4.)

It is in the silence of the desert that the word of God is best preached and best heard ; whence John the Baptist thought it not meet to preach repentance in Jerusalem, nor in the other cities of Judea, but in the wilderness, where men are most recollected, speak with more freedom, and listen with more attention, and where God communicates Himself more intimately both to the preacher, in order to inspire him with what he ought to speak, and to the hearer, in order to teach him what he ought to do.

It has ever been in the wilderness that God hath wrought His greatest wonders : there He caused His Heavenly manna to fall upon His chosen people ; there knoweth He well how to draw delicious waters from the rock to quench the thirst of souls as well as of bodies ; there it is, says the Prophet Jeremiah, that when a man sitteth alone and keepeth silence, he learneth quietly to wait for the salvation of God, by rising above himself (Lam. iii. 26. 28) ; in the wilderness it is that the Prophet tells us, that the sacred Spouse bringeth elect souls to speak to their heart. Hosea ii. 14.)

JESUS CHRIST also was wont to draw the multitudes into the wilderness and into solitude, that He might nourish their souls with the delicious food of His Divine Word, therewith working also transcendent miracles for the nourishment of their bodies : it is into the wilderness, and into the solitude of a high mountain, that the Adorable Saviour leadeth His three most beloved disciples, that He may manifest to them

His glory ; it is there, finally, that He was so often used to retire alone to pray.

It is in the wilderness that John Baptist exhorts and cries with all his strength, that he may prepare the way of the LORD by penitence. Retire into solitude if thou canst, in order to prepare thyself for the Nativity of the Desired of all nations ; if not, at least into the secrecy of thy "closet ;" there think of the bliss which awaiteth thee ; long for it ardently, close thy door, as thy Saviour counsels thee, that thou mayest be the more recollected, and that thy Heavenly Father Who seeth thee hidden in thy retreat, and heareth thee, may grant thee all thou shalt ask of Him.

SECOND PART.

It is in solitude alone, by meditation and by study, and never in the hurry of this world's intercourse, that wise men according to the flesh have been formed : the learned of past ages, those great men and mighty geniuses who have left us such beautiful moral precepts, and such brilliant tokens of their deep erudition. It is also, with much stronger reason, in retreat and in silence alone, that the wise according to the Gospel are formed. Verily, we must be alone, in order deeply to study, and fully to know ourselves : we must be alone in order to meditate, to taste the Divine Truths, and really to know the Will of God.

Besides this, two things are needful in order to acquire that true Christian wisdom, which is infinitely higher and more perfect than all the wisdom of the heathens ; the first is, to know how to speak to God, the second is, to know how to hearken to God. The soul must speak to Him, God must speak to the soul ; she must know how to speak by prayer in order to represent her wants to Him in such wise as to obtain

her requests, and she never speaks better to Him than in solitude ; God must speak to her by His inspirations and by His grace, but first He must lead her into solitude, that He may speak to her heart ; for as He is jealous of our souls, of whom He is the Spouse, He wills to be alone with them ; He is averse to noise and tumult ; His Voice, which is suited but for the ears of the heart, cannot be heard amid the hurry and the noise of the world, whose language is too tumultuous not to take off that entire attention which we owe to the Voice of God.

Why doth the wise man, who is none other than the Christian man, retire into solitude ? It is that he may seek himself and find himself, and he findeth himself but that he may be the better fitted to seek God. When we seek Him thus, we shall find Him without fail ; in finding Him we possess Him, and in possessing Him we possess the most precious of all treasures.

AFFECTIONS.

To come forth from Nazareth, Thy country, O my Saviour ! even before Thy birth, and whilst yet shut up within the sacred womb of Thy Divine Mother ; to be constrained to leave an ungrateful city through the inhumanity of its inhabitants, although they were Thy kindred ; to retire to a forsaken and ruined stable ; to be born in such extremity upon hay in that fearful solitude, in the middle of the night and of the severest of seasons, without help and without attendants : Ah, Lord ! this is, indeed, to begin a solitary life betimes, and to give us a most impressive lesson of it.

To flee into Egypt almost as soon as Thou wast in the world ; to lead there a hidden life ; to live there unknown to all during the first years of Thy mortal life ; to go from one solitude to another, as if Thou

wert banished from the earth, of which Thou wast yet the Sovereign, to lead a hidden life until the approach of Thy Passion; ah, Divine Solitary! what an example of retirement dost Thou here give me! and how can I go to the solitude of Thy stable in order to ask Thee for favours, without practising a virtue which is so dear to Thee, and which 'Thou didst Thyself practise during thirty years? Can I approach it without shame, there to offer Thee my homage and my adoration, with my dissipation, my little love for a retired life, my desire of appearing, and my inclination to go out of myself amid a world which speaketh not of Thee, since it loveth Thee not, and knoweth Thee not?

From this moment I retire thence, O my God! that I may think of nothing but of preparing myself for Thy Nativity: but help my weakness; fix my levity; disgust me with this deceiving world which I have loved but too well; give me free access to Thy Stable; there do I fix my dwelling, resolved not to come out thence till Thou shalt come forth from it Thyself.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

ON SECLUSION.

I will bring her into the wilderness, and speak to her heart. (Hosea ii. 14.)

He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it (the LORD's yoke) upon him. (Lam. iii. 28.)

Holy soul! be alone, that thou mayest consecrate thyself to God only; flee from the world, remove from thy friends and even from thy closest intimates. (S. Bern. Sermon. xl.)

The solitary frees himself from three enemies who

engage him in many combats ; these are, his eyes, his ears, and his mouth. (S. Ephrem, de Vitâ Spir.)

TWENTY-SEVENTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

GOD A BABE.

"Ye shall find the Babe," said the Angel to the shepherds ; and this was the "sign" he gave them of the power of God our Saviour. God and man ! We have made you perceive with admiration the depth of distance between them, which nothing could bring near but a miracle of the love of Almighty God. But between God and a Babe wrapped in miserable swaddling clothes ! in a stable ! this is yet more surprising, yet more humiliating for God ; yes, Divinity joined to infancy is a miracle yet more incomprehensible.

Thus the well-beloved Disciple said not that God became man, but that He became flesh : "the Word was made flesh" (John i. 14) ; otherwise we might have imagined that He had taken a human body at the time of its full manhood and perfection, in order to avoid the humiliations of infancy ; but by saying that He was made flesh, he teaches us that He took a flesh newly formed in the womb of His Mother, that He waited the ordinary time to come out thence, and that, finally, He was born in a way which, although wholly pure and wholly sacred, yet had nothing in appearance which raised that Birth above that of other children.

Our infancy is not wearisome to us, because our reason not being yet developed, we feel not its disgrace ; but the Infancy of Jesus is joined to a supreme reason, of which He had the perfect use from the moment of His conception : thus His Love put Him designedly into a condition so humiliating and totally unworthy of His sovereign Greatness.

Finally, in this incomprehensible Mystery of love and of abasement, the Almighty God permits Himself to be wrapped in swaddling clothes, because He has become a Child ; and the Sovereign LORD, Who nourisheth Heaven and earth, is obliged to have recourse to the sacred bosom of Mary, in order to receive that nurture upon which will depend the Life of the Author of Life itself, because His love for man hath reduced Him, very GOD as He is, to the condition of a feeble Babe.

"So true is it," says St. Augustine⁷, "that we ordinarily become that we love : love earth, thou wilt become earth ; love God, thou wilt become God." God loved man, and became Man ; He loved infancy, He became an Infant.

PARAPHRASE ON THE ANTIPHONE

"O EMMANUEL."

"O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the Gatherer of the people, and their Saviour ; come Thou to save us, O LORD our GOD !" (Is. vii. 14 ; viii. 8 ; xxxiii. 22. Gen. xlix. 10. Matt. xii. 21. Is. xlii. 4.)

O Emmanuel ! that is to say, O God with us ! in this sacred Mystery it is, O my Adorable Saviour, that this glorious Name may most justly be applied to Thee, a NAME for us so precious and so propitious, and more justly at the time of Thy Nativity, than at any other : for, alas ! sin had estranged us from Thee, it had made a wretched gulf betwixt Thee and men, which an infinite Mercy and a miracle of Love could alone reclose.

This hast Thou done, O merciful God, in the Mystery of the Incarnation ; Thou dost penetrate the infinite space which lies between Heaven and earth ;

⁷ Serm. de Diversis.

Thou descendest from the glorious throne of Thy Majesty ; Thou comest to be born, to live, and to converse with us, to make Thyself like unto us, in order to facilitate our approach to Thee. We were, alas ! without a guide, and Thou comest as a King, as a Father, as a Friend, as the Desired of all nations ; and, finally, as a mighty Deliverer, to loose us from sin, from death, and from Hell ; come, then, O my God and my Saviour ! to succour us.

HOMAGE TO THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST IN
THE MANGER.

O Adorable Blood, Who beginnest to flow in the Veins of my Jesus, Which sustainest the Life of that Adorable Saviour in the stable, and which wilt sustain It during thirty and three years, until the sad moment marked out in the decrees of God, wherein It will be poured out for the salvation of mankind ; I adore Thee with my whole heart : flow then within those infant Veins and beneath that tender Flesh, to quicken It, and to lead It on towards Its perfect growth : I have a right over every drop of which Thou art composed, for Thou art the price of my ransom, the sacred material and the glorious instrument of my redemption.

O Adorable Blood, Thou burnest with ardent zeal to be shed, without delay, in order to hasten my bliss ; but my Saviour Who, according to the sure word of the Prophet, wills that my redemption should be "plenteous," waiteth until His Veins be enlarged by the succession of years, that so They may contain and pour forth a greater abundance of it. But, alas ! I shudder when I think that the Blood of this Saving God, Whom I adore, will be one day drawn from His Veins upon Calvary by the cruelty of the executioner : but that which is the cause of my fear and grief is also that of my hope and of my eternal happiness.

Christmas-Eve.

DAY OF SALVATION.

PRACTICE.

REMEMBER, when thou awakest, those consoling words of the great Apostle to the Philippians: "We look for the Saviour, the LORD JESUS CHRIST:" and let this hope, which will be fulfilled to-morrow, produce in thee a holy joy. (Philip. iii. 20.) Pay Him beforehand thy first homage in the Stable, where He is about to take His Birth, for there He beginneth to fulfil His glorious offices, by the humiliations, by the poverty, and by the sufferings which He there endureth for thy sake; but in order to answer His Adorable designs, so direct all thy views and all thine actions of the day, that there may be none which tendeth not to this most important end, and of which thou couldst not say, I am working out my salvation.

MEDITATION UPON SALVATION.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

FIRST PART.

"Thou shalt call His Name JESUS; for He shall save His people from their sins." (Matt. i. 21.)

These words were brought from Heaven by an Angel, and addressed to St. Joseph, in order to rid him of all suspicion and of all fear concerning the incomparable purity of Mary, his espoused, by assuring him that that which was conceived in her was of the HOLY GHOST, and that she would bring forth a Son, Who would be called JESUS, that is to say, SAVIOUR, "for He would save His people from their sins."

(Ibid.) Such is the prophecy, which ought to be so infinitely joyous to us, and which concerns us so deeply, as it is the prophecy of our own salvation: think upon it, and receive it with joy, even as an exile in a strange land would receive the news of his recal before the morrow's light, to the bosom of his native country; as one for a long time sick would receive that of his perfect cure; as a slave borne down with ills that of his liberty: enter into the feelings of these unhappy ones, between the time of the news and the event; what would be their transports of joy, and what reception would they offer, what caresses would they heap upon their deliverer!

Behold, I say, the words of the prophecy; but assuredly shall we have its accomplishment to-morrow; think of it, occupy thyself with it, prepare thyself for it with assiduity and with joy: but whilst giving thyself up to holy joy, be careful to cleanse thy soul from every thing which could displease the Divine Deliverer Whom thou lookest for.

The Prophet Isaiah was at the distance of many centuries from His Coming; yet did he ardently desire this Saviour; he asked Him of Heaven and of earth, when he said in his mysterious transports: "Drop down, ye Heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down Righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth Salvation, and let Righteousness spring up together." (Isa. xlv. 8.) We have come to the Eve of the Saviour and of Salvation; occupy thyself to-day with the like sentiments and the like desires.

SECOND PART.

As salvation is not the work of God alone, but that of God and of man; and since this Almighty "God, Who hath made us without us," says St. Augustine, "yet will not save us without us;" hence it comes

to pass, that all are not saved though they have a Saviour, and all do not purchase Heaven, though they have that which could give them its possession.

It is an article of faith, that God willeth the salvation of all men : " God our Saviour, Who will have all men to be saved," says the Apostle (1 Tim. ii. 3, 4) ; but there are many men who will not be saved ; for the Will of God and the will of man must concur together, in order to assure this end. God hath sufficiently shown His sincere Will by His Incarnation, by His Nativity in a Stable, by His Sufferings, and by His Death ; but all men will not enter upon the paths which would obtain its application for themselves, nor keep the commandments, nor enter the race of penitence ; their luxury will not permit it ; they possess the Merits and the Blood of JESUS CHRIST, which is a more than sufficient price for buying Heaven ; but, lovers rather of their bodies than of their souls, they will not employ the infinite treasures which are offered them, because mortification and the practice of good works must be added to It, which would cross their self-indulgence. Thus it may be said, they will not to be saved ; and we cannot be saved without willing it ; and when we effectually will it, we take means for attaining that end ; the business of our salvation must be preferred to all others, it must be looked upon as the most important, as the most urgent, and as the only one we have in this life, and we must act accordingly : ask thyself now if thou wilt effectually to be saved.

AFFECTIONS.

I acknowledge, O LORD, with Thy prophet, that Thou only art my God and my Saviour (Ps. cvi. 21) ; that Thou art my Light and my Salvation, and that Thou alone art He Whom I ought to fear and to love above all, because Thou art my LORD. (Ps. xxvii.

1, &c.) I know it, and I desire to live and die in this faith and this dependence, which forms my whole glory, my whole happiness, and my whole security: but vouchsafe to let me add to this gratitude, with the same Prophet, that prayer which he made with tender confidence before Thee, in order to dispel all his fears, and to calm all his anxieties upon his eternal salvation; say Thou to my soul, O my God: "I am thy Salvation," and make me feel its truth. *Dic animæ meæ: Salus tua ego sum.* (Ps. xxxv. 3.)

But, O my Saviour, is not my request rash and unbecoming? Hast Thou not said this sufficiently by what Thou hast done for me in the Mystery of Thine Incarnation, and of Thy Nativity? To have taken my likeness after having given me Thine Own! To be born in a Stable and upon a Manger! Thy Pains, Thine Infant Cries, Thy Tears, do not they all tell me enough that Thou art my Salvation? Thou wilt repeat it for me a thousand times during Thy mortal Life, by Thy Words, by Thy Miracles, by Thy tender solitudes, and by Thine earnestness as the Saviour of sinners, and Thou wilt say it still more audibly by Thy Sufferings; the piercing Voice of Thy Blood, which will be shed upon that Cross, planted on the Mount of Calvary, will cause all the inhabitants of earth to hear that Thou art their Saviour: blessed shall I be if I respond to this most gracious voice! Grant me grace to profit by it, and to will my own salvation as Thou wilt it Thyself.

PASSAGES FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE AND THE FATHERS.

UPON SALVATION.

The LORD is my Light and my Salvation: whom shall I fear? (Ps. xxvii. 1.)

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (Philip. ii. 12.)

LORD, if I have committed that for which Thou canst condemn me, Thou hast not lost that whereby Thou art wont to save. (Medit. ap. S. Aug. c. 39, from S. Anselm. Med. 3.)

All we do for the health of our body will perish ; but all we do for the salvation of our soul is laid up in Heaven.

TWENTY-EIGHTH POINT IN THE INCARNATION.

AN ANNIHILATED GOD.

JESUS CHRIST humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. (Philip. ii. 8.) This is the thought which the Apostle St. Paul set before the first believers, in order to engage them to humble themselves, after the example of the Saviour, Who, though He was God and Greatness Itself, and the King of Heaven and of earth, yet humbled Himself and made obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, He Who was "the Life" and the Author of life.

Nevertheless, the Apostle, fearing not to give a sufficiently strong idea of the prodigious Humility of this Incarnate God, by saying that "He humbled Himself," heightened the expression in the same passage by adding another infinitely more energetic, and employing the term of complete annihilation, saying : "Let this mind be in you, which was also in **CHRIST JESUS** : Who, possessing the Form and the Nature of God, emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant : " *exinanivit semetipsum*. (Philip. ii. 7.)

How astonishing is this expression ! How is it possible to attribute it to God ? for a mere nothingness is the lowest point of abasement ; the mind of man can conceive nothing below this ; even God, Almighty as He is, can carry His Humiliation to no lower, or more debased point.

Let us go in spirit to the Stable of Bethlehem ; we shall there find That God made man, That pure Spirit become flesh : how strange a humiliation ! but there shall we also find an Infant God ! Ah ! how wondrous an annihilation ! for all the most glorious attributes which form the ornament of the Divinity, appear eclipsed and destroyed by infancy : verily, in saying the word " infant," we speak of one who was not, and who has just begun to be ; this it is which appears to annihilate the eternity of God : in saying " infant," we speak of a tiny, weak, infirm, and dependent creature, who cannot help itself ; this it is which appears to annihilate His Independence, His Greatness, and His Almightyness : in saying " infant," we speak of one dumb, whose tongue is bound by necessary silence ; this it is which seems to annihilate His quality of Eternal Word : in saying " infant," we speak of a little body confined on all sides ; this it is which destroys His Immensity : finally, in saying " infant," we speak of one who can neither think, nor know, nor reason, and who has ignorance alone as his heritage ; this it is which in appearance annihilates His eternal Wisdom. Let us then humble ourselves, since we are indeed nothing ; let us humble ourselves as justice, love, imitation of Him, require ; let us annihilate ourselves before this sovereign Majesty, Who, in the mystery of the Incarnation, made Himself nothing for love of us.

HOMAGE TO THE SOUL OF JESUS IN THE MANGER.

I adore Thee, O All-holy Soul of my Infant Saviour, and my whole soul consecrates herself to Thee for ever : Thou art the purest, the most perfect, and the most sublime production which hath ever come forth from the Hand of the HOLY GHOST, Who united Thee to the Adorable Body of JESUS CHRIST, when forming It of the most pure blood of a

Virgin ; and He placed Thee in that Body, which was the master-piece of His Power, of His Grace, and of His Love, in order to give It Life, and thus to consummate the ineffable mystery of our Redemption.

O wholly Adorable Soul of my Divine Saviour, Thou hadst then, yea, from that first moment, the perfect use of reason, albeit Thou wast enclosed within a small Body, but lately formed and placed in the sacred womb of Mary ; Thou thoughtest then, and in a manner infinitely sublime ; Thou adoredst the Father of Heaven, and in a way worthy of Him ; Thou lovedst Him with an infinite love, and as much as He is the object of love ; Thou didst already accept for my sake the humbled state to which Thou wast reduced, and the hardships to which Thou wast about to be exposed in the stable and in the crib, and the numerous woes of the three and thirty years of Thy mortal Life, the persecutions which Thou wast to suffer from the Jews ; in a word, Thou didst accept the sacrifice of the Cross, that most bitter and most shameful Death, that Thou mightest redeem me at the price of all Thy Blood. I owe my redemption, then, to Thee, O all-holy Soul ! accept, therefore, the sacrifice of mine wholly ; I consecrate it to Thee ; accept it, purify it, enlighten it, sanctify it, and make it worthy to love Thee eternally in Heaven.

Christmas Day.

PRACTICE.

BEHOLD, at length, the great day for which the earth had sighed during so many ages ; behold the blessed accomplishment of the promises of all the Prophets, of the desires of all the Patriarchs, and of all the

righteous men of the Old Law ; behold the blessed moment which draweth nigh, in which our bonds and our chains will begin to be broken : we are about to be delivered from the cruel captivity of sin, of death, and of hell, that we may enjoy the liberty of the children of God, which will be procured for us by the Divine Babe Who is now to appear ; and Heaven is about to open on our behalf, through the supreme Deliverer Whose Nativity takes place to-day in a mean stable and upon a miserable manger, between two beasts ; Who will for our sakes begin from this night the painful course of His Life, and Who will run the race even unto the end "as a" mighty "Giant," amid its fatigues, contradictions, humiliations, and sufferings, during thirty and three years, ever occupied in the most zealous and most laborious works of charity, in the conquest of souls, and Who will finish It but by the most dreadful agonies, and in the eyes of men the most cruel and most shameful of deaths upon Calvary.

Pass this great Festival in the greatest piety and in the greatest fervour thou canst ; do nothing which beseemeth not the holiness of the day ; be ever either in prayer, or in aspiration, or in thanksgiving, or in feelings of tender love for that Adorable Babe, or occupied in reading, or in the Divine Word, or in the offices of the Church. Carefully keep thyself from yielding any thing to-day to the world, nor even to permitted pleasures ; for every moment of this day, which is a day of life, of grace, and of redemption, is infinitely precious, and thou shouldest use every means to be spiritually "regenerated" with JESUS CHRIST, and to lose none of the graces attached to this great mystery.

Begin to celebrate this most solemn Feast from midnight, seeing that is the time in which our Adorable Saviour was born : enter into the Stable of Beth-

lehem in spirit, and leave it not during the day : JESUS being born in a stable, lying upon a manger like the child of the poorest of men, is a subject worthy to occupy thy whole mind and thy whole heart, not only during the day in which it took place, but all the days of thy life besides. Take part with recollection and with Seraphic fervency at the Holy Eucharist, which is this day thrice celebrated⁸, to show us that all men, whether they have lived under the law of nature, under the written law, or live, or shall live, under the law of grace, have not been, and cannot be saved but by JESUS CHRIST, Who is this day born.

At the Holy Eucharist⁹ thou shalt, with the deepest reverence, transfer JESUS, as it were, from His Cradle, that He may dwell in substance near Thy heart by Holy Communion. Prepare thyself so fervently for this, that thou couldst warm the tender

⁸ *Aux trois Messes.* The allusion is retained, (although with us the Holy Eucharist is consecrated only twice anywhere,) on account of the subsequent explanation. We might use acts of spiritual Communion. The treble celebration of the Holy Eucharist on the Nativity of the LORD (as also on the Festival of St. John the Baptist), is mentioned by Amalarius, a disciple of Alcuin, A.D. 830 (*de Eccl. Off.* iii. 38 and 44). It occurs in the Sacramentary of Gelasius, A.D. 492. Assem. (*Cod. Lit.* iv. 4.) conjectures that the celebration at midnight is derived from the early times of persecution. Yet not, surely, without reference to the time of His Birth. In 830, it was so ancient, that it was ascribed to Telesphorus (*Pseudo-Isid.* see Gratian. *decret.* P. 3. *de consecr.* Dist. i. c. 48. p. 1142. ed. Richter). S. Thomas Aq. (*in P.* 3. q. 23. art. 2.) says, that by the 1st is signified the Everlasting Nativity of the Father, to us hidden ; by the 2nd, at day-break, the temporal and spiritual Nativity by grace, like the day-star in our hearts. (2 Pet. i. 19.) The 3rd, His temporal and corporeal Nativity, whereby He came forth visible to us from the Virgin's Womb clothed in flesh. Other interpretations are also given, the same fact being viewed in different ways. [Ed.]

⁹ Altered.

Flesh of the Heavenly Babe through the fire of thy love, chilled as It is with cold in His Stable, and at the same time enkindle thy heart from the holy flames of love which incessantly burn in His.

MEDITATION UPON THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD
JESUS CHRIST.

TAKEN FROM THE GOSPEL.

"Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger." (Luke ii. 12.)

These are the words which the "Angel of the LORD" addressed to the "Shepherds" who were "keeping watch over their flocks," announcing to them the Birth of GOD the SAVIOUR; hear them with reverence, for they address thee as well as the Shepherds; join thyself with them; go in spirit to that Stable which is so infinitely more venerable and reverend than the most magnificent palace of earth's greatest kings: first thou wilt find there a "Babe lying in a Manger;" but this Babe is GOD. How wilt thou make the supreme greatness of GOD accord with the weakness of a Child? What a miracle of mingled humility and love! and how powerful a motive for casting down or for condemning our pride, and for engaging us to love Him with our whole heart!

If thou wast not enlightened by the light of faith, at the mere sight of that Stable, of that Manger, of those poor swaddling Clothes, and of that Infancy, wouldest thou not hesitate, and wouldest thou not ask thyself, hath not this Babe the lot of the ambitious worldling who is punished by the Hand of GOD, because he has deserved the most ignominious humiliations? or doth He represent the just who humbleth himself through virtue, and through love, that he may be found worthy of the rewards promised to the humble?

When thou fixest thy attention upon His extreme Poverty, dost thou not ask thyself if this Babe have not incurred the punishment of the rich miser, who has deserved to be despoiled of all his goods; or is He the Model of the perfect Christian, who despiseth the riches of this world, that he may be found worthy to possess those of Heaven?

But, instructed by faith and by a multitude of glorious events, I reply, that JESUS CHRIST in the Manger is both the one and the other, and that His infinite love for men, which hath humbled and despoiled Him, hath also engaged Him to take upon Himself the chastisement which those sinners deserved, and to serve as a rule and model for the holy. Thus, O my Saviour! Thou art here my Surety, Thou payest for me, and Thou art the Example which I desire to imitate: I would humble and despoil myself, for I deserved it, and I desire to love Thee and to follow Thy steps.

SECOND PART.

Consider yet more attentively this new-born Saviour; see what He suffers: He is a Babe just born; He is exposed in a stable, open on all sides to the severity of the season, in the midst of winter and in the middle of the night, and lying on a hard manger; remember that this suffering Babe is God essentially blessed in Himself; what thinkest thou of this blended joy and sorrow?

Seriously meditate at the foot of this Cradle; call faith to thy succour; she will tell thee that the Love of this Saviour for the world hath brought Him, rejoicing as He is in the Fulness of the Divinity, to this painful state, for He purposeth to win our heart, and He willeth, in order to make it worthy of the loving-kindnesses of His, to purify it and to disgust it with the voluptuousness of the senses through His suffer-

ings, so as to procure for it more surely those pleasures which are pure and eternal.

With this view He cedeth all the rights which His essential Blessedness giveth Him; He voluntarily delivereth Himself up to and abandoneth Himself to the impression of anguish; He suspendeth, on my behalf, by a miracle of His Love, that communication of joy and pleasure which naturally ought to exist between His Divinity and Humanity; He restraineth and eclipseth the overflowing of glory upon His Body, and permitteth that His Flesh should endure, what It was formed meet to endure⁹, in order to satisfy the Justice of God for the criminal pleasures of which men are guilty, whilst waiting till He finish upon the Cross that Sacrifice of sorrow which He beginneth to-day within the Stable: the time, the cold, the night, the place, all conspire to make Him a Child of sorrow. How touching is this spectacle! and what a condemnation of my self-indulgence and my cowardice! and what a call to suffer henceforth for my sins and for His sake!

AFFECTIONS.

In how strange a situation do I see Thee here, O God Almighty, God my Saviour! Thou appearest to mine eyes, and Thou art in verity, a Child; Thou art but lately born, and born that Thou mayest die, and yet faith tells me that Thou art the Eternal God: Thy Nativity took place in a poor and forsaken Stable, yet Heaven is Thy Dwelling-place; in a Manger, and Thy Throne is a Throne of glory; placed between two beasts, and in Heaven Thou art surrounded by Seraphim; in the darkness of night, and Thou art the Light which enlighteneth Heaven

⁹ An expression from Leontius c. Nest. et Eut. L. ii. B. 6. ix. p. 689, has been substituted for one approximating, at least, to an Eutychian heresy. See Petav. de Inc. x. 3. 3. seq.

and earth ; Thou sufferest cold, and the Prophets tell me Thou art "a consuming Fire ;" upon hay as the poorest of all men, and Thou art the Source of all treasures.

But, O my God ! must it be, that those for whom Thou hast suffered so much, should now so outrage Thee ? O Infancy of my Jesus, sign of His Humility, how despised art Thou now by the proud and by the ambitious, who think that a vile creature is permitted unjustly to exalt himself, whilst his God and Saviour is abased, humbled, annihilated, in order to cure his pride and to save him ! Mean Swaddling Clothes of my new-born Saviour, how often are Ye dishonoured, trampled under foot and torn by the lovers of wealth and of the world, who run after riches and vain adornments, whilst their Sovereign LORD despoils Himself of all, that He may inspire them with detachment from the world ! Stable of hardship, Divine Sufferings of mine Infant Saviour, how little are Ye known by the voluptuous and by self-indulgent worldlings, who desire to taste the false joys of the world, and to give themselves up to the pleasures of sense, whilst God made man is in sorrow and in tears !

Pardon, O Heavenly Babe ! look upon me with an Eye of pity at the foot of Thy Manger, where I am prostrate in spirit, to adore Thee, to offer Thee my homage, to show Thee my reverence and my love, and to ask mercy of Thee : give me grace to be born again with Thee ; come and be Thyself born anew in my heart, that Thou mayest make it worthy to possess Thee eternally in Heaven.

HOMAGE TO THE DIVINITY OF JESUS IN THE MANGER.

O ye powers of Heaven, ye Cherubim shining with light, ye Seraphim burning with the most fervent and the purest love, impart to me both your light and

your zeal, that I may know, that I may love, that I may adore within the Manger that same DEITY, to Whom Ye incessantly offer your homage and your adorations in Heaven; the DEITY in a Stable which serves Him as a palace, in a Manger which serves Him as a throne, in mortal Flesh and in the newly-formed Body of a Babe, which serves Him as a Sanctuary, and between two beasts, which serve as attendants upon the King of kings: God Almighty, enclosed and hidden under so many veils, He Who filleth Heaven and earth, O unheard-of prodigy! O Miracle of miracles! O ecstasy! O transport! which ought to overwhelm and rejoice all mortals, because for their sakes it is, and on their behalf, that God has willed to bring it to pass, and that the God of mercy hath become man, in order that of men He should make gods.

Adorable Divinity, I offer Thee my most reverential, my most loving homage, not upon the Throne of glory whereon Thou art in Heaven, amid the Seraphim, but in the Stable, but in the Body of a helpless Babe, wherein Thou now residest: there Thou "dwellest in the light which no man may approach unto," and mine eyes are too weak to fix them upon an object so brilliant, upon a Sun so dazzling; here Thou art enclosed in an Infant's Body, which mine eyes can bear; I could not see God, but I can see a new-born Babe, and that Babe is my God, "for in Him dwelleth all the Fulness of the GODHEAD bodily." There receive my homage, O my Saviour! until I may offer it to Thee, during a never-ending Eternity, upon Thy Throne of glory in Heaven.

Affective Paraphrases.

UPON THE SECOND LESSON¹.

TO OCCUPY THE MIND DURING THE DAY AND THE
FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS.

TEXT.

“There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus,
that all the world should be taxed.” (Luke ii. 1.)

PARAPHRASE I.

Thou art not yet born, O Heavenly Babe, when the unmeasured ambition, joined to the avarice of an earthly Prince, of whom Thou Thyself wast King, obliges Thee to quit Thy country, and to expose Thyself to a long and painful journey, in the severest season of the year, that Thou mayest be born in poverty and as a pilgrim in “a strange land;” not in a house, as are even those most destitute of this world’s goods, but in an uncovered and forsaken stable, and in a miserable manger. Although enclosed in the womb of Thy holy mother, Thou wast sensible of all these ills, Thou wert suffering with Mary who bore Thee, Thou wert suffering with the holy Joseph who led Thee, because they were both suffering for Thy sake, and Thou wert suffering through obedience to a heathen prince to whom Thou owedst none, seeing He was Thy creature: what a miracle of mingled humility, obedience, and love! Alas! if Thou sufferest so soon, and even before Thou seest the light, how sad a prognostication dost Thou give us by these anticipated sorrows, of what Thou art about to

¹ The Gospel. Orig.

suffer during the whole course of that mortal life, and before completing the great work of our redemption upon the Cross! But what a condemnation of my self-indulgence and of my cowardice, which protests and rebels against the least suffering, although I deserve to suffer, because I am a sinner!

TEXT.

"Joseph went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, to be taxed with Mary." (Luke ii. 4, 5.)

PARAPHRASE II.

Adorable Child! Thou wentest up with Mary and Joseph, because Thou wouldest have it so, and Thou wentest up without delay, despite the difficulties which are met with in a journey so replete with perils, because Thou didst will to give me an example of the most prompt obedience and of the most perfect detachment of heart, not only when the orders of God are to be submitted to, but also those of earthly Princes, and of all superiors whatsoever; and in order that we may obey, as Thou didst in this journey, Thou didst expose Thyself without hesitation to a multitude of fatigues, of hardships, and of misfortunes. Lord, if Thou hadst been born in Thy mother's house in Nazareth, where the Mystery of Thine Incarnation was accomplished, Thou wouldest not have been destitute of the conveniences of life in such a pressing occasion; but Thou wilt to be a Child of Obedience and a Man of Sorrows, in order to redeem me and to teach me to obey and to suffer for Thy sake, and to satisfy Thy Justice, because I am a sinner.

Woe be to me if I forget this Divine lesson, which Thou givest me even before Thy Nativity! O sensual pleasures, imperfect attachments, I renounce with my whole heart all ye contain most flattering

and most seducing ! O secret rebellions, delays invented by sloth and by self-love, independence, I detest you ; my JESUS still enclosed in the womb of His holy Mother, teaches me by His Example that we can only be found worthy of the "liberty of the children of God" by obedience, and of the pleasures of the next life, all-pure as they are ever enduring, all-satisfying, by the sufferings, the privations, and the mortifications of this.

TEXT.

"Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, to be taxed." (Luke ii. 4, 5.)

PARAPHRASE III.

Thou didst allow Thyself to be led, O Heavenly Babe, by Saint Joseph, and to be borne by Thy Divine Mother from Nazareth, Thy country, to Bethlehem ; and Thou didst this through obedience to a Prince, the worshipper of idols, which Thou hadst already condemned to Hell : Thou, O Almighty God, Who, though enclosed within the narrow bounds of the Virgin's Womb, wast still the Light of the world, the Leader of Thy people Israel, the Lord of Hosts, the King of kings, and Who mightest, hadst Thou willed, have cast him from the throne whereon Thy Almighty Hand hath placed him, have condemned him, and laid him in the dust. Thou didst obey him, nevertheless, and that, as soon as his decree appeared, obedience being so dear to Thee, as it will henceforth ever be, that sooner than forfeit it, Thou wilt hereafter lose Thy life by the most sharp and shameful punishment.

What an example dost Thou give me, O God my Saviour ! and how precious ought obedience to be to me, since it conducts me safely to a sovereign bliss,

delivers me from the intolerable burthen of mine own will, and is consecrated and honoured by Thine example! But, alas! what punishment ought I to expect for all my acts of disobedience, and for my continual rebellions against Thy grace, if I strive not to expiate them without delay? Thou obeyest Thine own creature, O Heavenly Babe! and Thou art the Almighty God; I disobey my God and my superiors who represent Thee, I, who am but a vile creature, who am but dust, but corruption and sin: how strange a blindness!

TEXT.

"Joseph also went up with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child." (Luke ii. 4, 5.)

PARAPHRASE IV ².

O my Saviour, Thy Divine Mother was a meet depository of the most rich and sacred of all treasures; a goodly chariot bearing the King of kings within her chaste womb; a bed of state, a bed of joy whereon Thou my Saviour mightest repose, Thou Who art hereafter to be the Spouse of Virgins, of holy souls, and of the whole Church; the most sacred of all Temples which ever has been, or will be; a holy Altar whereon Thou the Immortal God hast placed Thyself, clothed with that flesh of ours, which was of the substance of Thy Virgin Mother; with deepest reverence do I adore Thee, O my Saviour, in Thy Divine fullness, which is meet to be adored, not by mankind alone, but by all the Heavenly Host; Thou fillest all things, and Thou art, as Thy well-beloved disciple saith, "full of grace and truth," for Thou art God, though hidden beneath a double veil, even that of

² The following "Paraphrases" to the 12th inclusive, have been altered from Invocations of the Blessed Virgin to prayers to our LORD, the words being, as far as might be, retained. [Ed.]

Thine Own and of Thy Mother's flesh, O Adorable Fulness! now our only hope, and for ever the joy of all who have been, who are, and who will be, to the end of time, if they correspond thereto by their faithfulness.

O Infinite Fulness! Whose sacred stream of grace and mercy I am sure of receiving if I am found worthy. Ah, holy JESUS! surely no sanctuary on earth is so sacred or so worthy of all reverence as was the Virgin at once and Maternal Womb of Thy Mother, since it contained Thee our God and Saviour; the Lord of Heaven and of earth. Be gracious unto us, O Immortal God! Who now abhorrest not the Virgin's womb, and art about to be born for the salvation of all men. Translate us, we most earnestly beseech Thee, from the strict tribunal of Thy Justice to that of Thy Divine Mercy; and this we beg, for the sake of Thy glorious name, JESUS.

TEXT.

"Joseph also went up with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child." (Luke ii. 4, 5.)

PARAPHRASE V.

Be Thou borne, O Sun of Righteousness, until Thy rising; but, oh! rise quickly, Thou pure and shining Light, Light eternal, in Whom is no darkness, and Who art to lighten all men in the paths of righteousness and of salvation. Show us Thy Face, O my God and Saviour, which as yet Thou hidest, which the Angels so ardently desire to look upon, and which the Prophets call the "Desired of all nations," "and we shall be saved." Reveal to our eyes that Infant Flesh, more pure than the heavenly spirits, which is to be the instrument of our bliss.

Be Thou borne, O Heavenly and glorious Burden, as far as Bethlehem; no hindrance art Thou to her

who beareth Thee on Thy journey; for rather dost Thou upbear her by Thy grace and Divine virtue, since Thou, Who art her Son, art yet the Almighty God: portans a quo portabaris. (S. Bern. Serm.)

But remember, O sweet JESUS! that for us Thou art borne, and for us too wilt Thou be born, and live and die, and thus work out our redemption. Far more noble, indeed, and more sublime is the manner in which Thou dost work out that of Thy Holy Mother, by preventing her from falling: our's Thou wilt work out, upraising us when fallen; be merciful to us, O merciful Saviour; be Thou our Mediator, according to Thy Name of "Mediator," between God and man. Thou who wert born for us in time, grant that at this holy season we may again be born in Thee by new fervour, and may never more be separated from Thee, either in time or in eternity³.

³ Some of the Greek fathers of greatest name made no scruple to infer from some words of Holy Scripture, that S. Mary was not exempt from slight infirmities (as S. Basil, S. Chrysostom, and S. Cyril of Alexandria, Amphilochius also, besides Origen and Tertullian). In the west, Pelagius first makes mention of her sinlessness with other righteous persons, but with the remarkable addition "whom piety must needs confess to be free from sin." S. Aug. in answer, sets the question aside, not as certain but as irreverent to discuss: "Expecting then, the Holy Virgin Máry, of whom, out of reverence to the Lord, I will make no mention, when the question is of sin; for how know we what greater grace to conquer all sin was conferred on her, to whom it was vouchsafed to conceive and bear Him, of Whom it is certain that He had no sin." This hint and natural feeling seem to have been followed in the Western Church, although Eadmer (A. 1121.) still speaks of her being cleansed, at the Incarnation, "from any remains, if such there were, of original or actual sin." The Council of Trent does not so much rule it, as declares it to be the received belief of the Church; "No one can, his whole life through, avoid all even venial sins, except by a special privilege of God, as the Church holds of the Blessed Virgin." The statement of Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, that Mary was holy,

TEXT.

"The days were accomplished that she should be delivered." (Luke ii. 6.)

PARAPHRASE VI.

O Heavenly Saviour ! at length the joyful moment is arrived which will overwhelm us with glory and with consolation, and will put an end to our misery, dry our tears, make our sighs to cease, break our chains, begin the happiness of our life, and assure to us the joy of eternity. For nine months hast Thou, The First-Begotten before all worlds, vouchsafed to lie concealed within the Virgin's womb ; the time is now come in which Thou wilt show Thyself to the eyes of all nations which have so long sighed for Thee ; the time is come in which Thou wilt come forth from that sacred womb, as a stream issues from its source, that it may inundate the whole earth with its waters. This Fruit of Life is now arrived in fulness of blessing at its perfect maturity ; time is it that It should of Itself detach Itself, without injury to the choice tree which bore It, that It may become the food, the delight, and the salvation of mankind ; time is it that Thou shouldest come forth from the Virgin's womb. Needful was it that Thou shouldest be the miraculous offspring of a consecrated Virginity, and be brought forth with the same purity wherewith Thou wast conceived ; so is the ineffable miracle of Thy Nativity, one consequence of that of Thy Conception. Finally, as Thou, the Light and Source of all Light, becamest incarnate that Thou mightest lighten men, so without delay wilt Thou come forth from that Virgin womb as a ray goeth forth from the earthly sun, and penetrates the

pure, God-minded, free from all spot in body, soul, and understanding, was received by the sixth Œcumenical Council, and so by us also. (From Pet. de Inc. xiv. 1.) [Ed.]

purest crystal without defiling it. O Blessed Saviour, we desire to offer Thee our vows at the moment of Thy Nativity, in union with⁴ those then presented unto Thee in Thy humility, and now in Thy unapproachable glory. Poor are our offerings; in Thy mercy render them acceptable, and accept them.

TEXT.

"The days were accomplished that she should be delivered." (Luke ii. 6.)

PARAPHRASE VII.

"Even so, come quickly," O Divine Saviour. With loving impatience do we wait for the blessed moment when Thou shalt go forth of "the Virgin's womb." Sun of Righteousness, arise, dispel our darkness by Thy Divine Light, and purify and kindle our hearts by Thy Heavenly Fire. Thou hast given Thyself to us, since Thou hast taken our flesh upon Thee; Thou hast become one of us, since Thou hast chosen to be "born of a woman," since Thou hast formed a Body for Thyself of her substance. Like as the HOLY SPIRIT vouchsafed⁵ to await the consent of her will, ere completing the great work of Thy Holy Incarnation, so do we wait for Thy Nativity, that we may show our joy and come forth from our captivity.

Be Thou our Help, O Heavenly Babe, Thou Who art the only Object of our desires, even as Thou art the Spring of all our joys; we pray Thee engrave deeply in our memory, in our minds, and in our hearts, the unspeakable debt we owe Thee for having wrought out our salvation by Thy Humility, Thy Purity, Thy Love, Thy Will, Thy very Blood, Thine Infancy, Thy condescension in becoming in all things like unto us, though in Thee dwelleth all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily.

⁴ See above, p. 7, note. [ED.]

⁵ See p. 124, note.

TEXT.

"She brought forth her first-born Son." (Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE VIII.

At length, O Adorable LORD, Thou art brought forth by her who, with more than angelic purity, was the Mother of her God, and of her and our Saviour. In that virginal earth, so fruitful in blessing, had, for nine months, been deposited the Seed of grace, of life, and of glory, in order that the fault of our first parents might be repaired, who ate in the earthly paradise the fruit of the forbidden tree. Thou, O JESUS, comest to be that precious Fruit whereof we are now permitted to eat, that our souls may be nourished, and prepared for the enjoyment of eternal bliss. Woe to us if we despise that Bread of life and of the Spirit, which strengthens us with the very Substance of the living God! woe to us, if among worldlings we seek forbidden fruits and the sensual pleasures they offer us, which can bring corruption only, poison and death into our souls!

Thou comest unto us, O JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God, the Son of Man, and the Saviour of all mankind. Sun of Righteousness, Thou comest forth from the chaste womb of Thy mother as from a cloud which was concealing Thee from our sight, and we shall now walk more securely by the help of Thy bright light. O Blessed "Seed of the woman," grant us grace to bring forth worthy fruits of penitence. Thou, the true Pillar of the Cloud, Who wentest before Thy people to refresh them in their pilgrimage, a Pillar of fire also to guide them lest they go astray, and to lighten their darkness, shine Thou on our hearts, we beseech Thee, yet interpose the cloud of Thy Humanity to shelter us in Thy Presence as the Sun of Righteousness.

TEXT.

"And she brought forth her first-born Son."
(Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE IX.

O blessed JESUS, who can tell how joyful was Thy mother's heart, when, after the unkind treatment of her "own city," and coming into the stable of Bethlehem, she at length gave us Thee, her Adorable Son. Oh, if the venerable sanctuary of that virgin heart were open to us, what depths and mysteries of the purest and most ardent love should we not find therein! What an intimate union! what a wonderful exaltation! what sublime contemplation! what transports of joy which the tongue will never be able to express! what deep peace, and with what ineffable sweetness was it not overflowed! What a holy measureless love towards Thee, our new-born God! a love the more pure and the more delightful, that it was mingled with no feeling of sorrow, which other mothers then have; for it was not surely meet, O blessed LORD! that Thy Mother should be subject to the sorrows of other women, for she was at once a mother and a virgin, and Thou, whose Mother she was, art God. By this glorious exemption thus belonging to her, wouldest Thou proclaim to the whole earth, that, according to the word of the Angel, she was "blessed among women."

But, alas! this pure and holy joy will soon be mingled with sorrow, by the prophecy of blood which shall be uttered by the mouth of Simeon; and she will know but too clearly that Thou, her beloved Son, canst fulfil the signification of Thy Name of JESUS, only by shedding hereafter, for the salvation of the world, that same Blood which Thou didst derive from her.

TEXT.

"And she brought forth her first-born Son."
(Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE X.

O blessed JESUS, Thou, the Saviour of all mankind, art now brought forth, Thou Who art the Virgin's Son : Thou camest forth from her chaste womb, but Thou didst not depart from her heart, Thou didst not cease to abide in her : now art Thou beneath her eyes, now art Thou the Object of all her pleasure ; Thou didst permit her the honour of embracing Thee, of bestowing on Thee a thousand loving and holy kisses, of closely pressing Thee to her venerable bosom, which hath borne Thee, and wherein Thy Holy Flesh was formed ; of nourishing Thee now with her own substance, giving Thee the food of her breast, on which depends Thy Life, O Thou Author of Life. Thou didst give her the enjoyment of Thy first tender love ; God as Thou art, Thou didst owe this to her, for as she was Thy Mother, and Thou hadst not man for father, Thou didst derive from her alone Thy Body and Thy Blood.

She then, O my LORD, was, at the blessed moment of Thy Nativity, Thy first worshipper, as she is now, too, the first and the most perfect of those who love Thee. She only, of the whole world, had a right to adore "That which was born of her." What in any other creature would have been an abominable idolatry, deserving the extremest punishment, is in her a rightful worship, and obtaineth for her everlasting crowns, because she was not the mother of man only, but also the Mother of God ; and in this glorious quality Thou wilt not admit the Angels of Heaven, or the kings of earth, until after her, to offer Thee, O Divine Saviour, their homage and their adorations.

TEXT.

"And she brought forth her first-born Son." (Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE XI.

What honour and what a glorious distinction hast Thou bestowed upon Thy holy Mother, O blessed LORD, in making of her own blood the rightful object of her adoration, the material, the instrument, and the Author of her own redemption, in that she brought forth Thee, O JESUS, Who art her Son, her God, her Saviour! Thus did she ever have the consolation, both during the whole course of her life, and now during an endless eternity, of adoring the Fruit of her chaste womb, of having concurred in Its production as Its only source, so that no other mortal could partake with her in this privilege. Thou didst redeem her by this same Blood, Which, before It flowed in Thy Veins, O Adorable Son of God, did first flow in hers.

Her redemption was more glorious than that of other men; in her it anticipated falling⁵, and she had no sins to weep over, whilst we can but offer to God a liberty whose beginning was soiled by sin. Such, O All-Holy Son of a holy and a Virgin Mother, was the glorious privilege which Thou didst accord her. But remember, O Blessed Jesus, that Thou, the Son of Man, deignest to call us brethren; that Thou hast redeemed Thy brethren by Thy Blood, and that I am one of them. Yet will Thy Name, Thy mark, Thy Sacraments, avail us not, unless we imitate Thee; O let us not bear Thy Holy Name to our punishment; conform us, O LORD, to the holy poverty of Thy Manger, that we may be united to Thy true worshippers; choose for us, LORD, what, for love of us, Thou

⁵ See above, p. 49 and 218.

chosest for Thyself; destroy in us what Thou hatest, and love in us Thy likeness which Thou givest.

TEXT.

“And she brought forth her first-born Son.”
(Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE XII.

Adorable JESUS, I see Thy Mother in the stable prostrate at Thy Feet, at the moment that Thou wert born of her pure Womb, in posture the most humble, and as if the least and vilest of all creatures, albeit she was Thy Mother: for Thou art at once her God and her Son, and the adoration she offers Thee, although she was the most favoured of all creatures, teaches me what I owe Thee, my God and my Saviour. Let her go still further, O Holy Child, let her wholly give herself up to sweet transports of joy and love: let her take Thee in her arms; let her, after adoring Thee, caress Thee with all the tenderness with which a mother's love can inspire her; let her closely press Thee, her Divine and beloved Child, upon her maternal bosom, and unite her lips to Thine by a multitude of holy kisses.

She had more right to do this than the Spouse in the sacred Canticles, who yet had the boldness to ask this of her spouse⁶; this was her privilege, whilst we sinners consider ourselves too much honoured if Thou suffer us to remain humbly prostrate at Thine Infant Feet; let her there take Thee, O Holy Child JESUS (as the daughter of Pharaoh said to the mother of the young Moses), and nourish Thee up for me, that so Thou mayest hereafter teach me those Divine Truths which will proceed out of Thy Mouth, in order to instruct me in the ways of Heaven, and to finish the great work of my redemption.

⁶ Cant. i. 2.

TEXT.

"And wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a Manger." (Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE XIII.

Almighty God! What! art Thou wrapped in swaddling clothes, Thou, Who art Strength Itself, and the Strength of the weak? are Thy small limbs wrapped, bound, and detained thus, constrained by clothes, imprisoned like those of a feeble infant deprived of reason? Thou, O my God! Who art the Author of liberty; Thou, O my Divine Deliverer! Who deliverest the captives who have recourse to Thy power; Thou, O adorable Child! Who camest upon earth to burst our bonds, to break our chains, and to deliver us from the cruel tyranny of sin, of death, and of Hell; Thou, Whose Almighty Arm restrains the fury of the sea, and sets its bounds, which it dares not pass, abases and disarms the most formidable tyrants, snaps the sceptres, and overturns the thrones of the most mighty monarchs who dare to resist Thee, destroying in a moment the most numerous and most formidable armies, which hath ever triumphed over all mine enemies, and by which alone Thy true soldiers conquer?

I adore Thee, O LORD, Who art the mighty God; I adore Thee in Thy Stable, in Thy Manger, and in Thy little swaddling clothes, as a voluntary Prisoner, and as a Prisoner of love. I adore Thine Almighty Power, hidden beneath the mysterious veils of this weakness, in which Thou hast willed to appear; and I will say to Thee with Thy great Apostle (2 Cor. xii. 10), that never shall I be stronger than when weak with Thee, nor freer than when living under the yoke of Thy law, and when captive for Thy sake.

TEXT.

"She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a Manger." (Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE XIV.

O Holy Child, what a marvel of humility and what a miracle of love was this, to allow Thyself to be wrapped in mean swaddling clothes, to allow Thyself, Who art God, to be reduced to captivity so humiliating, to conceal from us those Almighty Arms in their apparent weakness, which could have instantly overthrown both Heaven and earth; those Hands, which are able to work so many miracles, to enlighten the blind, and to cure all sicknesses; those infant Feet, Whose sacred prints I shall adore, and which will take so many steps, so many journeyings of love, to seek sinners, showing them the paths of salvation, and to cause them to walk in those of righteousness.

Thou didst will, O Adorable Saviour, to begin Thy mortal Life and to finish It in bonds: in the beginning, it is true, it is but swaddling clothes I see before me, but were more than these needful for imprisoning a new-born Babe? Alas! at the termination of Thy Life I shall see cruel cords. Little bands of linen now entwine Thy Body at Thy Birth; but cords will bruise Thy Hands, Thine Arms, and will closely bind Thy whole Body in the Garden of Olives, that Thou mayest be led to judgment-seats and prisons; and both captivities will be the work of Thy love, and of my sins, of which Thou hast complained by Thy Prophet, making him say: The bands of the wicked have encompassed me: *Funes peccatorum circumplexi sunt me* (Ps. cxix. 110); and at this price it is, O Divine Deliverer, that Thou wilt work out my redemption, and that Thou wilt break the chains of my sins.

TEXT.

"And laid Him in a Manger." (Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE XV.

To what exceeding hardships dost Thou expose Thyself for my sake, and from the first moment of Thy Nativity, O Adorable Babe! What! when brought forth from the virgin womb of the blessed Mary, wherein Thou hadst sojourned the space of nine months, and tender as Thou then wert, wast Thou laid upon hay in a miserable stable, uninhabited and uncovered, in the severest season of the year, and in the middle of the night? Ah, LORD! how does this Thy wondrous act overwhelm me, penetrate me, humble me, condemn my own self-indulgence, and open mine eyes to show me that I cannot gain Heaven, nor worthily bear the name of Christian, nor show Thee my love, if I imitate Thee not in Thy Sufferings!

What child of the poorest of earthly women was ever exposed to so hard a necessity? Other children, although laid on down, yet fail not to utter cries after their birth, because, whatever precaution may be taken, yet they ever suffer, although they cannot otherwise express their pains. But Thou, O my God! what didst Thou not suffer? What is more delicate and more susceptible of pain than the flesh of a new-born babe when exposed to the severity of the cold? This it is Which made Thee beforehand a Man of Sorrows. How touching is this sight! How affecting is it for those for whom Thou sufferest! How does it tend to soften me, to amend or to condemn my cowardice and my self-indulgence! Holy Child! teach me to suffer and to mortify myself for Thy sake.

TEXT.

"Because there was no room for them in the inn."
(Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE XVI.

With extreme grief do I here see, O Heavenly Babe! both St. Joseph, Thy zealous guide, who was to Thee as a father, and the blessed Virgin, Thy Holy Mother, eagerly seeking, from door to door, in Bethlehem, some shelter which might provide Thee a more commodious Birth-place than a stable and a manger; but their extreme and but too evident poverty draws upon them nothing but refusals and contempt from the inhabitants of that ungrateful city, despite their urgent need. Ah, LORD! Thou Who art Greatness Itself, to what humiliation, to what a sorrowful extremity dost Thou expose Thyself, even before Thy Nativity, in the person of Thy parents!

For, indeed, among that crowd of travellers who were going up to be taxed, according to the decree of Cæsar, how many wicked ones, and men of no reputation, were preferred and lodged before Thee, Who art the King of kings, the Holy of holies, and Almighty God! Thou wast sensible, O Holy Infant, albeit concealed in the Virgin's womb, of so unworthy, so unrighteous a preference. Thou didst submit to it for my instruction, and for my sake, and Thou didst already offer it to Thy Heavenly Father in expiation of my sins, and in order to begin, when coming into the world, the great work of my redemption; it was also to teach me, for Thy sake, to suffer all harshness from creatures, all the discomforts of poverty, enforcing on myself that I am nothing, and desire nothing, because I am a sinner, and that I am but a stranger upon earth.

TEXT.

“There was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE XVII.

O my Divine JESUS ! how dreadful and unrighteous does this refusal appear to me, since it was made to Almighty God, Who could have destroyed those unworthy citizens, and have instantly brought down the fire from heaven to reduce both this ungrateful city and all its inhabitants to ashes ! but how many mysterious instructions and consolations for my soul does it also contain, if I be faithful enough and devoted enough to follow the example of my JESUS, in the practice and in the love of poverty. "He became a little Infant," says St. Ambrose⁷, "that thou mightest be a perfect man ; He bound in swaddling clothes, that thou mightest be free from the bonds of death ; He in the manger, that thou at the altar ; He on earth, that thou in heaven ; He had no other place in that inn, that thou mightest have many mansions in the heavenly abodes. That His poverty then is my patrimony, and the weakness of the LORD is my strength. He chose to be in need for Himself, that He might abound to all. The weeping of that tearful Infancy washes me from my sin ; those tears cleanse me. More then, O LORD JESUS, do I owe to Thy sufferings, in that I have been redeemed, than to Thy works, that I was created."

Perhaps, too, O my loving Saviour, Thou didst design to touch my heart thereby, and to beget in it a compassion for Thy Poverty and for the unjust refusal which it drew upon Thee from men, who are only gained by display, and to win me gently to offer Thee my heart, that Thou mayest there take spiritual Birth by Thy grace and by my love. Enter then into this heart, O Divine Infant ; make it worthy to be to Thee, not as an incommodious stable,

⁷ ad loc.

destitute of all things, but as a temple, a sanctuary, and an altar, wherein Thou mayest constantly be served, adored, and loved unto the last breath of my life, and during all eternity.

TEXT.

“There was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke ii. 7.)

PARAPHRASE XVIII.

I perceive, O Heavenly Babe, that I feel indignation in my heart against this ungrateful city, and against its inhabitants, thus destitute of the feelings of humanity, who had the harshness to refuse Thee shelter in Thine exceeding need; but, alas! I have but to look within myself; if I do myself the justice I deserve, I must allow that it is less against them than against myself, that I ought to turn all my hatred and mine indignation. Those inhabitants knew Thee not; they knew not that Mary was both a Virgin and a Mother, and that she bore in her chaste womb both their God and Saviour, and the Messiah Whom they were waiting for, Whom they were desiring, and Whom their prophets had been teaching them to hope for for so many ages; and I, O LORD, know that Thou art the living God, my Creator, my Judge, my Saviour, the Author of my life, and that possessing Thee within me, I possess the Source of all treasures; nevertheless, I have refused many, many times, to open the door of my heart to Thee, whilst Thou wast knocking at it by the solicitations of Thy grace; and this heart I have opened to Thine enemies and to mine own; that is to say, to dangerous recollections, to imperfect feelings, and to ill-regulated attachments to creatures.

Pardon, O LORD, my refusals and my disobedience; come in unto my heart, take entire possession of it,

be absolute Master thereof: it is Thine without reserve; none shall take part with Thee; never shall its doors be opened except to Thee Alone; abide in it, purify it; inflame it with Thy Divine warmth; be born again therein, consecrate it, and go not forth of it for ever.

TEXT.

"There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks." (Luke ii. 8.)

PARAPHRASE XIX.

Scarcely hast Thou come forth from the blessed womb of Mary, O Child of graces and of marvels, than Thou dost already begin the glorious office of Saviour; not being able to announce Thyself by Thine own mouth, because Thou hast condemned it to silence, in order to conform Thyself to other children, Thou dost substitute heavenly spirits for Thy voluntary inability, and Thou dost send them first, not to the rich, but to poor shepherds; not to the great of this world, but to those of the lowest condition: and thus it is, O Almighty God, Who art Greatness Itself, and the Source of all treasures, that Thou dost prefer poverty to riches, lowliness to greatness, the crook to the sceptre.

These poor shepherds were keeping watch over their flocks: a shining light surrounds them, they are sore terrified, they fear: the Angel shows them, he proclaims to them Thy Birth, he points out the place to them, he tells them that they shall find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger; and they instantly set off; they quit their flocks that they may come to adore Thee. It is as much for me as for them, O Adorable Saviour, that that bright light shines, that this Angel appears and

speaks. O give me the same faithfulness in answering him, and may nothing henceforth be able to stop me from obeying the leading of Thy grace.

TEXT.

“There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night.”
(Luke ii. 8.)

PARAPHRASE XX.

Adorable Infant! Thou hast done greatly more for me than for those poor shepherds who were watching during the night over the flocks which had been confided to them; and I have been far from being as attentive and as teachable to the voice of Thy grace, and as faithful in replying to it by my ready obedience. Like them, I have seen the light, but a much more precious and much more manifold light, since Thou hast daily shown me, both what I ought to believe, and what I ought to do in order to take the road of Thy Cradle which leadeth unfailingly to Heaven; Thou hast taught me all Thou hast done for me from Thy Nativity until Thy Death; Thy Gospel which Thou hast left me is the spring from which I may daily draw the purest lights for the regulation of my conduct, for there do I read all that Thou hast said and all that Thou hast done to instruct and to save me. The Angel spake to them but once, and I have heard Thy Voice a thousand times, both with my bodily ears, by Thy preachers, and with those of my heart by the solicitations of Thy grace; and instead of “keeping watch” in order to hearken to Thee and to obey Thee, I have allowed myself to be overcome by the sleep of idleness, and I have been watching but to hear the pernicious voice of the world.

Awaken my soul from its drowsiness, O Divine Jesus! lead me Thyself to Thy Cradle, let me there

abide at Thy Feet that I may adore Thee: there speak often to my soul, and give me such docility of heart as to profit by Thy Divine lessons.

TEXT.

"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, Which is CHRIST the LORD." (Luke ii. 10, 11.)

PARAPHRASE XXI.

What more cheering news can a captive hear, when laden with irons, than the announcement of the arrival of a mighty deliverer, who comes to break his chains, to set him free from bondage, and to procure him entire liberty? What a subject of joy for these poor shepherds, who are here preferred to crowned heads, and invited first, and that by celestial spirits, to visit and adore the Saviour!

What a subject of joy for the true Israelites, and for all those who were waiting for the Messiah, to learn that their common Deliverer was born! Thou, O LORD, art the Joy of all nations, wilt Thou not be mine also? Could I be so miserable as to be insensible, and to take no part in it, whilst the very heathen find their happiness therein? Could I find death where others find life?

But in the midst of so many subjects for joy, have I no cause for sadness? Have I profited as I ought by the Nativity of my Saviour and my God? Have I been re-born with Him by a more fervent piety? Does this Birth of my Infant JESUS make all the impression of spiritual joy in my inmost heart which it should make, if I felt, as I ought, the weight of my chains, which are my sins, and the happiness of my redemption? Make me more sensible, O my Divine

Saviour, to the true interests of my soul, and to Thy exceeding goodness.

TEXT.

"And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the Babe." (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXII.

By how strange a sign, O ye Angels of Heaven, do ye point out to us the Birth of the King of kings! At the birth of a mortal prince, all gleams with illuminations and festal fires of joy: the darkest night rivals the clearness of the brightest day, although he be a man and a sinner; and here I see but a single star over a mean shed, which marks the birth-place of God our Saviour, although faith tells me that He is Light of Light, the Sun of Righteousness, and the Dayspring which lighteth Heaven and earth, Begotten in the Bosom of The Father "before the morning star^s." The birth of earthly princes is extolled by names of pomp, and by titles of grandeur, which are prepared for them even before their birth; and ye tell me only that I "shall find a Babe." Gold, embroidery, the richest and most magnificent things which can be found, shine upon the clothes and upon the cradles of the children of earthly kings; and I here see but straw and poor swaddling clothes: finally, superb palaces re-echo with acclamations and with shouts of joy; here all is in the deepest silence; Joseph and Mary, who alone form the court of this King of Heaven at His Nativity, are in a miserable hut and alone, and Jesus is placed but in a manger, between two beasts, in a homely and forsaken shed. Ah! Divine Saviour, what a difference! What humility and what love!

^s Ps. cix. (cx.) 3, Vulg. (altered slightly as seemingly confused.) [Ed.]

TEXT.

"Ye shall find the Babe." (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXIII.

Almighty God, King of Heaven and earth, is this Thyself? Under so wondrous, so amazing a disguise, can I recognize Thee, and hope not to deceive myself by the weak and humbled situation in which I see Thee? My mind and mine eyes cannot here accord but by the help of a blind faith (2 Cor. v. 7); reassure me, O Heavenly Babe, Thou Who art the Source of Light. Faith tells me that Thou art "a pure Spirit," and mine eyes tell me that Thou art a corporeal God, which my reason alone cannot reconcile: faith tells me that the vast expanse of Heaven and earth cannot contain Thee, because of Thine unbounded Greatness, and mine eyes see Thee in a little Infant Body confined on all sides: faith tells me that Thy Throne is in Heaven, and encompassed by Seraphim who unceasingly chant the Song of Thy Glory, and I see Thee in a manger between an ox and an ass (Is. i. 3): Thy Divine oracles teach me that Thine Arm is an Almighty Arm, and I here see only the little arms of a child which have no strength, besides being imprisoned and bound with a swaddling-band like those of other children.

Ah! Heavenly Babe and Almighty God, Thou art nevertheless the Same. Yes, Thou art my God, and a God yet the more strong, that Thou hast espoused my weakness; so much the more lovely, as Thy love for me hath the more humbled Thee. Teach me, then, to love Thee as I ought, that so I may reply to Thy bounties, which are infinite, and love Thee Alone till my last breath.

TEXT.

"Ye shall find the Babe." (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXIV.

What a wondrous spectacle dost Thou offer us in a shed and in a manger, O Divine Jesus! What an incomprehensible mystery dost Thou here present to my soul! I see in Thee God and an Infant, Greatness and lowliness, Light and darkness, Almighty and weakness, Glory and shame, the Source of treasures and poverty; and it is in Thee Alone, O Heavenly Babe, that these opposite extremes are met. I see Thee in sorrow and in tears, Thou Who art in the Bosom of God, Who art God, and Who art the joy and bliss of Angels and of men.

Thou appearest to be, and Thou art in truth a new-born Babe, and I know that Thou art from all eternity: Thine Infant Mouth keeps silence, and yet I know that Thou art the Living Word of the Father of Heaven, that it is Thou Who openest the mouths of the Prophets: I see Thee reduced to extreme need, and yet it is Thou Who, in the wealth of an inexhaustible Providence, which Thou Thyself dost set in motion, findest wherewith to furnish all our wants.

Divine Infant, Thou art in a Manger as being the loving Centre wherein the things most opposite again unite; and these are but so many miracles which Thou dost, because Thou lovest me: be then the Centre of my heart, draw it to Thee effectually, that so it may abide in Thee, that Thou mayest abide in it, that it may rest in and learn from Thy sacred Heart how it must love Thee.

TEXT.

"Ye shall find the Babe." (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXV.

What dost Thou in Thy Stable and in Thy Crib, O Heavenly Babe? Unfold to us this Mystery, so necessary to all our happiness, and in which Thy

Love for us hath so much part. Art Thou therein like other children, whose minds are incapable of reasoning and even of thinking, and their hearts of feeling and of loving? Art Thou there inactive, powerless, and insensible? Open to our faith, to our understanding, and especially to our heart, the doors of those two sanctuaries, Thy Mind and Thy Heart, enclosed in the feeble body of an Infant, that we may know, and feel, and love, and adore all that passes there on our behalf, so as to profit by it, and from it to draw motives for loving thankfulness.

Thou showest me, O Adorable Babe! that, being God under the veil of Childhood, Thy Mind is a mine of knowledge and of wisdom, which contains, and through a deep humility conceals, all its treasures from the eyes of men: Thou adorest Thy Heavenly Father in spirit and in truth; Thou offerest Him Thy homage and Thine adoration, very God as Thou art, and Thou offerest Thyself to Him in sacrifice for my sake.

Thy Heart, infinitely more fervent than all Seraphim, burneth with love ineffable, both for that Adorable Father and for me, since It cometh to sacrifice Itself, in order to bestow upon me the life of grace and the life of glory. What shall I render to Thee, O Divine Infant, that I may acknowledge so many benefits? Thou wouldest only that I should love Thee: what more just?

TEXT.

"Ye shall find the Babe." (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXVI.

Thou art hidden in a poor shed, O Divine Infant! and Thou dost there appear to the world's eye as weak and disarmed: yet nevertheless, when I look fixedly upon Thee, and open the eyes of faith upon what passes and upon what Thou doest, I discover such

transcendent marks of Thy Greatness, of Thy Power, and of Thy Divinity, that I hesitate not a moment in adoring Thee as my God ; and my veneration and my love wax stronger in proportion as I see Thee weaker and more humbled.

Feeble Infant as Thou art, Thou createst a shining star in Heaven, whose brightness excelleth every other in the firmament ; and by this new and miraculous meteor, Thou drawest philosophers towards Thee, Thou bringest three kings from their dominions, that they may pay to Thee, as to their chief Sovereign, the homage of their diadems and of themselves, and may adore Thee as their God ; Thou callest poor shepherds, who quit their flocks that they may acknowledge Thee as the Messiah ; the Angels of Heaven leave their delightful dwelling-place at the same instant, that they may come within Thy Stable to sing anthems to Thy praise ; and thus it is, O Divine Jesus ! that neither Heaven nor earth can resist Thy drawings, although Thou mayest appear in the extremest weakness.

Draw me resistlessly to Thee, O Divine Infant ! be the heavenly load-stone of mine iron heart ; touch it, soften it, incline it, and permit that, in order to make mine adorations more acceptable, I may unite them to those of the Angels, of the shepherds, and of the kings, and that with those holy worshippers I may make but one spirit, one heart, one voice.

TEXT.

“ Ye shall find the Babe.” (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXVII.

What a wondrous humiliation, O Almighty God, to have become man for our sakes, to have clothed Thyself with a fragile flesh like our's, subject to all its inseparable miseries, excepting sin ! Thou Who

mightest have redeemed us without exposing Thyself to woes or sufferings ! But, above all, what excess of graciousness to become a Child ! ah, this is the fulness and the miracle of Thy love, which I cannot enough admire nor fully know ! Ah ! if Thou wert not God, infancy would not so exceedingly humble Thee ; for man in being born, instead of losing, acquires a being he had not before, and far from childhood being burthensome to him, he gains by the succession of years an increase of stature which was not his due ; besides this, infancy is not a misery to him, because being deprived of reason, he reflects not on what he feels.

But Thou, O my Saviour ! as Thine Infancy is joined to the perfect use of supreme Reason, Thou feelest all its disgrace : this humiliation shows itself in its fulness to Thy Mind ; Thou sufferest it willingly, in silence, without complaint ; and the infinite love Thou hast for men puts Thee voluntarily, and even deliberately, into this condition, humiliating and wholly unworthy as it is of Thy Sovereign Greatness. After this wondrous Example of profound humility, shall I refuse, I, vile creature that I am, a worm, a quickened clay, a living nothingness, to humble myself at the sight of my miseries, and for the love of my God ?

TEXT.

“Ye shall find the Babe.” (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXVIII.

Heavenly Spirits, I hear your voice, and if it strike not the ears of my body by articulated sound, it strikes those of my mind and of my heart. Since it addresses itself to me as well as to the Shepherds who were keeping watch over their flocks, I yield myself to it, I obey it, I join with them in going to Beth-

lehem to adore JESUS. Thou pointest Him out to me too precisely to deceive me, when Thou sayest that I shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes in a stable, and lying in a manger; I will go with them to offer Him my homage and to adore Him, persuaded that He is my God, my Sovereign, and my Saviour; for adoration is due to God, homage to a King, and loving gratitude to a Saviour.

I go into a miserable shed to see an Infant lying upon hay; ah! my reason, left to itself here, seems to condemn my earnestness, remonstrating with me that I ought not to undertake a journey for an object so small in appearance: but an Angel speaks, his voice has something in it more imposing than that of men: he is from Heaven, he comes from God; my mind is amazed, my heart is moved, and faith awakens; she it is who shall lead me; by the eyes of faith that Stable and that Manger will appear to me more sacred and more venerable than the palaces of kings, and I shall see that God, that Sovereign, and that Saviour hidden beneath the veils of infancy. O Heavenly Babe, I adore Thee, and I would love Thee with my whole heart; give me grace to become a child with Thee, that so I may be made partaker of Thy redemption and of Thy Kingdom, which Thou hast promised to children.

TEXT.

"Ye shall find the Babe." (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXIX.

Go to the Manger, O my soul! and go thither with lively faith and ardent piety; the Angel of the LORD, by calling thither the Shepherds of the neighbouring country, calls thee thither also; "Ye shall find the Babe," said that celestial spirit; but this Babe is the same Almighty God Who hath created

Heaven and earth; thus blessedly will ye be indemnified and gloriously recompensed for your obedience. In this Adorable Babe ye will find an enlightened Teacher, Who will instruct you what ye ought to think, what ye ought to love, what ye ought to do, that ye may reach the blessed home for which ye long; He will teach you that man, who is nothing, ought not to exalt himself, when God, Who is Greatness Itself, for his sake abaseth Himself to the humble rank of childhood.

Approach this Cradle without fear; the Hands of the Adorable Infant Who reposes there, as upon His Throne of grace and of love, are no longer armed with thunderbolts, but bound with little swaddling-bands, and they come out from that weak prison but to embrace thee: thou wilt see in those infant Eyes no mark of scorn, of anger, or of indignation, but on the contrary, evident signs of His graciousness and of His love; the Tears He sheds are proofs that He is touched by thy miseries, that He has come in that humble condition only to bear them, and to deliver thee from them.

Divine Babe! I obey Thine orders, I draw near; receive me; I adore Thee with deep veneration, as my God, and I love Thee with all the affection of my heart, as my Saviour.

TEXT.

"Ye shall find the Babe." (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXX.

Would one not say, O Adorable Infant, seeing Thee wrapped in those poor swaddling-clothes, that Thou art weak like other children, Thou Who art Almighty God? Yes, LORD, Thou art weak, but Thou art so only because it is Thy Will; I adore and love this weakness, as being the proof of Thy love for man, whom Thou wilt save.

I perceive even that I am more beholden to Thy Weakness than to Thy Strength; by Thy Strength and by Thy Power Thou hast taken me out of the nothingness of non-existence; but by Thy Weakness, O Adorable Redeemer, Thou hast taken me out of the nothingness of sin. Without Thy Strength I should not be in the world, but without Thy Weakness I should yet groan in the bitter captivity of sin, of death, and of Hell; I should have no right to the celestial heritage, nor any light, nor any help to conduct me thither, nor any grace to be found worthy of it; its gates would have been closed against me always, without any hope of being ever able to enter.

O Weakness of my Infant Jesus, sacred bands which detain His whole Body in captivity, I respect you, I adore you, not only because ye have had the honour to touch the Adorable Flesh of my Saviour, but also because detaining Him in captivity, ye show me that He made Himself a Prisoner even from His Childhood for my sake, and that He hath voluntarily espoused my weakness in order to clothe me with His Divine Strength.

TEXT.

"Ye shall find the Babe, wrapped in swaddling-clothes." (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXXI.

Thy mean swaddling-clothes, O Adorable Child, touch me with compassion, they instruct me, and condemn my attachment to the conveniences of life: Thou hast willed to make them, says the devout St. Bernard, a sacred Sign and Standard, that Thou mayest bring back the luxurious and the avaricious, in order to engage them to follow Thee under the banners of mortification and repentance; but, alas! they are now become but a "sign spoken against"

to a world, which has its part only in avarice, luxury, and self-indulgence. O worldly soul, exclaims St. Jerome, fearest thou not lest this Divine Infant, so poor, so humble, and so mortified in His Birth, raise His Voice from the midst of His Cradle, and substitute a Voice of thunder for that of Childhood, that He may reproach thee for so many acts of self-indulgence, so many vain adornings, at the expense of modesty and poverty?

Almighty God, become a Child for my sake, henceforth I will reverence the poor clothes with which Thine Adorable Body is entwined; I will that they should be an example to me and a motive for reforming the luxury and the vanity of which I may have been guilty; I will often say with confusion to myself, Behold, vile and proud creature, whose body is but clay, defilement, and corruption, wherewith to abash thee; wilt thou henceforth seek the most precious stuffs to cover it, to bedeck it, and to please the eyes of mortals, whilst the Infant Body of thy Saviour and thy God is covered but with miserable swaddling-clothes?

TEXT.

"Ye shall find the Babe, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger." (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXXII.

A stable, straw, hay, and a manger; behold, O King of kings, the gorgeous palace; behold, O Divine Babe, worthy of all love, the magnificent and downy bed upon which Thy tender Body will repose for some days, when come forth from the sacred womb of Thy holy Mother; behold the magnificent furniture which will form the whole splendour and brilliancy of Thine apartments, of Thine Who art God and the Sovereign Master of all earthly Monarchs; behold

the palace wherein Thou and Thy holy Mother are about to receive and admit to audience those three Kings, who come in the name of all the Gentiles to contract an alliance with Thee: the most august of all meetings, since it is God Who giveth audience, and three sovereigns who are admitted to it! the most solemn and most important of all alliances which were ever contracted, since it is eternal, and openeth the way of Heaven to all the Gentiles!

Behold, LORD, that which ought inseparably to attach me to Thee, and to condemn my self-indulgence: Thou art here the Divine Pattern Which I ought to imitate, or the Just Judge Whom I ought to fear: Thou sufferest, because Thou lovest me: and willest to amend my heart and to show me that there are eternal pleasures to which we cannot rightly aspire but by mortification. But, alas! what use have I as yet made of this? O Cradle of my new-born Saviour, how much cause have I to fear that hereafter thou mayest condemn me!

TEXT.

"Ye shall find the Babe, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and lying in a manger." (Luke ii. 12.)

PARAPHRASE XXXIII.

Behold, O Heavenly Babe, what Thy love for me hath made Thee do, when coming into the world: it is all that, at so tender an age, Thou couldest do to show me the overflowings of Thy goodness, until Thine enduring and exceeding charity shall cause Thee to sustain infinite labours, sufferings unbounded, and Death the most cruel and most shameful, that Thou mightest spare me the same, and procure for me the life of grace and the life of glory.

I am filled with infinite reverence for Thy Manger, O my Saviour! First, because it is the bed, or

rather, the Throne in which hath reposed Thy Holy Humanity, when issuing from the sacred womb of Mary; secondly, because it is the painful fore-tokening and the sad prelude of all Thou wilt endure for me in Thy Passion, and is, says a holy Doctor, the precious Tree upon which are engrafted both Thy Passion and Thy Death, and the sufferings of all Martyrs.

But, O my Saviour! must it be that those whom Thou hast loved so much, and for whom Thou hast so early begun to suffer, should daily do Thee so many acts of insult? Venerable Cradle of my God, how art Thou now dishonoured by the world! O anticipated sufferings of my Jesus, how little are ye known by voluptuous men, who give themselves up to the pleasures of sense, whilst their Saviour rests upon hay, is in tears, and weeps in His Cradle, only because their miseries touch Him, and He desires to deliver them from them!

TEXT.

“And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the Heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the Highest.” (Luke ii. 13, 14.)

PARAPHRASE XXXIV.

What greatness and what lowliness! what glory and what humiliation together, O Divine Infant! What humiliation to be born in a stable, in a manger, and in the midst of beasts! but what glory to be adored by Shepherds and by Kings; nay more, to be announced and extolled by “a multitude of the Heavenly host!” Verily, I hear Angels, who come down from Heaven, sing anthems to His Honour, and strive to celebrate this Birth with all possible joy and pomp; they are surrounded by a light yet more brilliant as it shines in the midst of a dark

night, and they form the most melodious concert that was ever heard.

Heavenly Powers, just it is that your joy should burst forth, the glory of this Nativity is for Heaven ; those places of that Heavenly Jerusalem, which the rebel Angels had left void, are soon about to be re-filled by the souls which JESUS CHRIST will ransom at the price of His Blood : ye will take part in that glory, since ye now see Him, Who is Almighty God, "made lower" than you by the Humanity He hath espoused.

Sing to the Most High, since this Birth gives to the Eternal Father a coequal God for subject and for worshipper : and before this Birth He had Angels and men only. God made Man is the most glorious and the chiefest design of this Heavenly Father, and completeth His glory. It is also, O Heavenly Babe, that which assureth mine, if I have the blessedness of being faithful to Thee unto Death ; and this I hope by the help of Thy grace. Amen.

The last Day of the Year.

DAY OF REPARATION.

PRACTICE.

ENTER to-day into the spirit of a sincere, humble, and cordial reparation to the Justice of God, for all the sins which thou hast committed during the whole course of the year ; and begin this reparation as soon as thou awakest, without quitting the practice of it all the day long, until thou art obliged in the evening again to betake thyself to sleep ; thou shalt even let this thought close thine eyes : accompany this repa-

ration with thanksgivings for all the benefits which He hath heaped upon thee during the year ; examine all the acts of faithlessness thou hast committed, bewail them with all thy heart, ask God to pardon thee for them, make acts of sorrowful contrition for them, and lay upon thyself some practice of penitence.

MEDITATION UPON REPARATION AT THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.

FIRST PART.

Bring plainly before thyself, that there has been no day in which thou hast not committed some sin, and that in consequence there has been no day in which thou didst not owe reparation to God : if " the just fall seven times a day," and much more thou, who art a sinner, how many times hast thou fallen during the whole course of an entire year, and how many reparations art thou bound to make to Him ?

Bring thyself to feel also, that there is no sin which does not inflict injury on the Majesty of God : it offends His Sovereign authority, by the contempt which the sinner offers to Him by breaking His Divine precepts ; it offends His unbounded Greatness, by the little respect it has for His Divine Presence : choose, and choose well, take the surest part, which is that of reparation ; happily for thee it is the most easy. Fear to fall into the Hands of God, Who does not Himself repair the injuries done Him, without its costing the sinner much, either in this world or in the next ; hasten to make this reparation thyself, it will cost thee much less, however severe it may be : let thy mind, thy heart, thy tongue, and thy hands, enter into the service of this reparation, necessary as it is for thy happiness and for thy security : let thy mind enter into this reparation, by bitterly reflecting upon the manifold unfaithfulness of this whole year, and by

often saying to God during the day, with the Prophet Isaiah, "I did mourn as a dove : mine eyes fail for looking upward : O LORD, I am oppressed ; ease me. I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul." (Isa. xxxviii. 14, 15.)

Let thy heart enter into this also, by conceiving a true sorrow for all thy past acts of faithlessness, and forming a devoted resolution to expiate them and to repair them, until the Justice of God be satisfied : thy mouth, by often pronouncing such acts of it as express the sincerity and the bitterness of thy grief ; and thy hands, by punishing thyself in order to anticipate the severity of God's Judgments.

SECOND PART.

Remember, said the devout St. Bernard to his religious brethren, that to begin well is verily something ; and to sustain these happy beginnings by a corresponding progress and fervour, is a great grace and a favourable presage for the future ; but to be faithful to God, to persevere, and to increase in piety and in love unto the end, is the assurance of salvation, is the crown of life, since it is a happy end only which putteth us in possession of eternal happiness. Finish the year, then, as thou wouldest wish to finish thy life, finish it by a sincere reparation ; and in order to give more strength and more acceptableness to thy reparation, finish the year in God, with God, and for God.

Finish it in God, Who is Himself the ultimate End to Which we aspire ; immerse thyself, absorb thyself, lose thyself in the abyss of His Goodness and of His Divine Essence : blessed loss, since we there lose ourselves but to find ourselves again more blessedly in Him ; let thy mind, thy heart, thy will, and thy desire, tend continually towards that Adorable Centre of all good, in Whom all beings repose, and

out of Whom there is nought but disquietude and tribulation.

Finish it with God ; abide to-day in the intimate Presence of this all-Gracious God, that so He may accept thy reparation ; let it not be a mere passing act, but an abiding dwelling with Him ; make a law to thyself, not only to begin, but also ever to finish with Him ; the year, then, may indeed end, but thou wilt never end, because thou wilt ever be with God, not in this life only, but throughout all ages, without the possibility of being ever separated from Him.

Finally, finish the year for God : faithfully refer to this Divine Object and to this Adorable End, all that, with the help of His Grace, thou shalt do well, and thou wilt ever be able to do all things, being with Him and acting for Him.

Purify and rectify all the imperfect views which have insinuated themselves into the actions of the year. Examine in His Presence what thou hast acquired, or what thou hast lost : humble thyself at being still the same ; bewail thy small advancement whilst death strides forward, and if thou hast the blessing of communicating to-day, do it in reparation for all the lukewarm, imperfect, and useless Communions which thou hast made during the course of the year, and conclude by an act of thanksgiving for the benefits thou hast received Therein.

REPARATION.

Humbly prostrate before the Feet of Thine Adorable Majesty, I implore, O my Saviour ! Thy Divine Mercy, for all the sins of which I confess myself guilty during my whole life, and particularly during the course of this year ; for all my rebellions, for my unfaithfulnesses, for my negligences, and for the backwardness I have shown in following the leadings of Thy Grace, and the inspirations with which

Thou hast favoured me, for all my lukewarmness, for all my negligences, and for all the faults which I have committed in receiving Absolution^a and the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist; in the first, by my little preparation, sorrow, and resolution; in the second, by my little fervour; and finally, by the little profit I have derived from either, for they would have filled me with much more abundant graces, and would have caused me to make far greater progress in the conquest of my passions, and in the practice of virtue, if I had had a more lively faith, a more ardent love, and a more exact and more faithful attention.

Pardon me, O my Adorable Saviour! for all my cowardice, for all my irreverence, and for all my distractions in the worship I owe Thee, in Thine Own sanctuary, and before the Eyes of Thy Divine Majesty; for my self-indulgences, for my sensualities, for my self-seekings, and for all the base complaisances which I have shown to the world, which I knew to be Thine enemy and mine own.

Teach me, then, LORD, how I can repair so many infidelities, and I will obey Thee, whatever it may cost me; Thou wilt that I should offer Thee, as a sacrifice of reparation, all my memory, all my mind, all my heart, all my desires, all my will, all my senses, all my body, all that I possess, and all that I am? I consent to this, O my Divine Saviour! I offer them Thee with my whole soul, happy if Thou wilt vouchsafe to accept them.

But, O Adorable Jesus! Thou who art my Saviour, be also my "Repairer;" I offer Thee to Thyself with

^a " Dans la réception des Sacremens de la pénitence et de l'Eucharistie." See note on Surin, Foundations of the Spiritual Life, p. 228. But they who use not private confession must have far more ground to pray, and to fear lest, joining in the public confession with lukewarm hearts, the "keys which never close, open not." [Ed.]

all Thy Labours, all Thy Merits, all Thy Sufferings, and all Thy Blood ; they are mine, Thou hast given, yea, transferred them to me ; I may, therefore, offer them to Thee, and Thou canst not refuse them. Blessed in having in Thee wherewith to make reparation to Thyself, for my own sins, since Thou hast taken them upon Thee by dying for my sake, and in order to make in my place a more than sufficient reparation to Thy Father in Heaven. Ah ! if I am so miserable as to find an offended God in Thee, I have also the comfort of finding Thee also to be God my Saviour, God my Mediator, and God my Re-pairer.

The First Day of the Year.

DAY OF RENOVATION.

PRACTICE.

BEGIN when thou awakest, both the year and the day, by an universal renovation, and by an entire consecration of thy whole spirit, thy whole heart, and thy whole soul, with all her powers, and, finally, of thy whole self, to JESUS CHRIST, Who is come Himself to renew all on earth, both by the Blood which He begins to shed to-day beneath the knife of Circumcision, and by the Adorable Name of Jesus, which He takes in this humiliating and painful ceremony.

Often pronounce this Holy Name, which is so sweet, so pleasant to utter, since it signifieth "Saviour;" but endeavour, when pronouncing it, to think what it signifies, and to make thy heart feel it, and intreat this Divine Jesus to destroy in thee the old man, and to grant thee the grace of a true renovation.

Prostrate thyself as soon as thou canst ; make all thy requests for the year in the Name of JESUS and of the Blood He sheds to-day ; perhaps it will be the last of thy life. Entreat God, with all the fervour in thy power, for His Protection against all thine enemies, visible and invisible ; for His Light to lead thee in the paths of salvation ; for the preservation and increase of faith, of His Grace, of His Love, and for final perseverance ; and take heed frequently to reiterate these requests during the course of the day.

**MEDITATION UPON RENOVATION, AFTER THE
EXAMPLE OF THE SAVIOUR CIRCUMCISED,
AND CALLED JESUS.**

FIRST PART.

“ When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the Child, His Name was called JESUS.” (Luke ii. 21.)

Behold, a new thing, mysterious and wondrous, in which we see a blessed fore-tokening of our happiness, and the beginning of our redemption ; God is become a Child ! How unheard-of a change ! Uncorrupt Spirit now clothed with our flesh ! God, impassible in His own Nature, now subject to grief, suffering, and shedding of Blood ! God, the Supreme Being, Infinite, Incomprehensible, Who hath a Name hidden, ineffable, which no man can know, nor even name, but He Alone, yet now graciously willeth to take a Name, even that of JESUS ; which He allows us to give Him, and which He mercifully willeth that we should place within our hearts, to make It the object of our love, and the motive for our confidence, and in our mouths that we may call upon and invoke It in all our needs.

This Adorable Name is laid upon the Saviour ; it is His, but it is thine also ; preserve it as a treasure

all thine own, that thou mayest employ it as thou shouldest; pass insensibly from the Name to the Person, Who to-day beginneth to bear it. Thou canst not pronounce it in spirit and as a Christian, without representing to thyself, on the one hand, Him Who is Almighty God, Whose Greatness is infinite, and on the other the New Man, the Child of wonders, humble, patient, Object of all love, full of charity, Who eclipses on our behalf all the great attributes of His Divinity, Who suffers and Who begins, for our sakes, to shed His Blood, Who thus invites us to "put off the old man," and to "put on the New" which is Himself, by an universal renovation of life, of demeanour, of conduct, and of love, according to the counsel of the great Apostle, "that we should walk in the newness of life;" *Ita et nos in novitate vitæ ambulemus.* (Rom. vi. 4.)

"I find delight and pleasure," said St. Bernard, "in pronouncing that lovely Name: when I am faint-hearted it revives me, and my fervour rekindles; this sweet repetition, far from being wearisome, even lifts me up; pronounce it a thousand times a day, and thou wilt feel a relish ever new, an innocent joy, and a holy pleasure: what hindereth thee from experiencing it?"

SECOND PART.

"To give us an example of humility and devotion," says St. Augustine⁹; "He vouchsafed to receive those very Sacraments by which His Coming was fore-announced," and therewith He received the Adorable Name of JESUS. "Great¹ and wonderful mystery! The Child is circumcised, and is called JESUS. What

⁹ Serm. ccx. in Quadr. vi. § 3, substituted for an unsafe passage from App. Serm. cxxxv. (de temp. 36.) contrary to S. Augustine's doctrine, and favoring a heresy. [Ed.]

¹ Added from S. Bernard. Serm. i. de Circumcis.

meaneth this connexion? For circumcision seemeth to belong to one who needeth salvation, rather than to the Saviour; and the Saviour it beseemeth to circumcise, rather than to be circumcised. But behold, and own the Mediator of God and man, who, from the dawn of His Nativity, conjoineth things human with Divine, lowest with highest. His Circumcision proveth the truth of the Humanity He had taken, and the Name which is above every name indicates the Glory of His Majesty. He is circumcised as being the very Son of Abraham; He is called JESUS, as being the very Son of GOD. For not like those of old doth my JESUS bear an empty or unavailing Name." He is the LORD of all hearts, Whom the well-beloved Disciple saw upon His throne of grace, and Who said, "Behold, I make all things new;" *Ecce nova facio omnia.* (Rev. xxi. 5.)

On the eighth day He beginneth to shed that Blood, of which a single drop would have sufficed to redeem mankind, since it was of value infinite: during the out-pouring of this first Blood, they gave Him the Adorable Name of JESUS; and if He shed this new and precious Blood during the imposition of this most venerable Name, it will cost Him far more, yea, even its last drop, when He shall consummate our redemption upon the Cross.

Transport thyself in spirit from the place where He is circumcised, to Calvary; cast thine eyes upon this suffering, this dying GOD; seek the cause of a Death so unjust, so bitter, so shameful; if thou wouldest know it, raise thine eyes above the bleeding Head of that expiring GOD; read the title of the Cross; the Jews² have provided that it be in three

² In that it was "the superscription of His accusation" (Mark xv: 26) brought by the Jews. Thus the Jews and Pilate concurred to declare a truth, which Pilate understood not, the Jews rejected. [Ed.]

languages, that none may fail to know it; behold the words: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Learn, when reading this title, that He dies, innocent as He is, only because He is JESUS, which signifieth Saviour: this first word is enough, it unfolds before me the whole mystery: the Name of JESUS, which He takes to-day, is His Sentence of Death for man's salvation.

In this single mysterious word, written at the top of the Cross, do I find the unerring oracle of my redemption, and the Death of the Redeemer; in it I see the motive, the cause, the accusation, and the entire testimony which condemneth Him to Death. How precious then should this Name be to thee, since it containeth the whole economy of thy felicity! "Hasten then," exclaims St. Bernard, "not to profane novelties, but to the Name of JESUS, which is thine:" salvation is in thy grasp, since it is written "Whosoever shall call upon that sacred Name shall be saved:" *Quicumque invocaverit nomen Domini, salvus erit.* (Rom. x. 13.)

AFFECTIONS.

"I confess, O my Adorable Saviour!" said the penitent Augustine, "that my failings are numberless, and have deserved eternal chastisement; that I have committed but too many enormous sins, for which Thou mightest justly condemn me: but I again draw breath, O my JESUS! I recover from my dread when I think that Thou hast a Name upon which I may build up all my hope, because it is a Name which Thou hast taken only in order to save me, and this Saving Name wilt Thou ever bear, and never lose." (St. Aug. Conf.)

By this Adorable Name of JESUS it is that I ask of Thee a true renovation and grace, to fall no more this year, or during my whole life, into the sins which

I have committed in those which have preceded it, and so sincerely and rigorously to repent of all, that if it were the last of my life, I should attain to "die the death of the righteous," and to be crowned with them. Grant me new light, new strength, new grace, and new fervour; and this I earnestly implore, both for the sake of this first beginning of Thy Precious Blood-shedding on this day, and by Thine Adorable Name of JESUS, which is my whole confidence.

Venerable Name! whose first idea was conceived in the counsels of Eternity, which the Patriarchs represented in their figures, which the Prophets witnessed in their oracles, which Angels brought from Heaven, which the Apostles proclaimed through the whole earth, which the Martyrs glorified by the effusion of their blood, which hath calmed tempests, stopped the flames, healed the sick, raised the dead, put the devils to flight, which rejoiceth Heaven, maketh Hell to quake, which upholds the strong, which cheers spiritual combatants, and comforts and strengthens the weak-hearted!

Be a JESUS then to me, O my Divine Saviour! during the course of this year, and of my whole life, in order to save me from the corruption of the world; be a JESUS to me upon the bed of death, in order to save me from Hell; but be a JESUS to me also in Heaven, that Thou mayest make me taste the truth and the fruit of my redemption in the eternal enjoyment of my God and Saviour, Who hath borne it for my sake. Amen.

APPENDIX.

**Special Prayers¹ for Advent and the Nativity
of the Lord, in the Sacramentary of S.
Gregory.**

(SEE PREFACE.)

FIFTH WEEK BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD.

* Raise up, O LORD, Thy power, and come; and what Thou hast promised to Thy Church, do Thou mercifully work in her to the end of the world, Who livest and reignest with God the Father in the Unity of the HOLY SPIRIT, God for ever.

*Super Oblata*². * Mercifully regard, O LORD, the Sacrifice to be offered unto Thee, that it may both cleanse us from the defects of our nature, and make us acceptable to Thy Name, Through.

Pref. It is very meet and just, right and salutary, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O LORD, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God, through CHRIST our LORD; the

¹ Those prayers to which an * is prefixed, occur in the Gelasian Sacramentary also; those retained in the present Roman Missal are marked with an †.

² i. e. over the offerings, the elements to be consecrated.

Mystery of Whose first Advent do Thou make us to celebrate with worthy praises and reverence, and to pass this present life unblameably, that we may await His Second without fear. Through Whom, Thy Majesty Angels praise, Dominions adore, Powers reverence in awe, the Heavens, &c. and the Seraphim.

Blessing. May the LORD give you the prize of unfeigned charity, that ye may live in peace with all. Amen. May ye be delivered from all the snares of the enemy, and pass this present life in all purity. Amen. May ye also be free from guilt of conscience, that ye may nothing fear in the Day of the Judgment to come. Which may Himself.

*Post Comm.*³ *May our souls, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, obtain this which they long for, that they be kindled by Thy Spirit; that, like lamps, replenished with the Divine Gift, we may shine as bright lights in the Presence of CHRIST Thy Son, at His Coming. Through the Same.

*Super Populum*⁴. *O LORD, we beseech Thee, mercifully hear the prayers of Thy people, that they who rejoice in the Coming of Thy Only-Begotten Son in the flesh, may, at His second Coming in His Majesty, receive the reward of everlasting life. Through.

FOURTH WEEK BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD.

† Raise up, we pray Thee, O LORD, Thy power and come, that from the impending perils of our sins we

³ In the Sacramentary, called *Ad complendum*, the last prayer in the Communion Service.

⁴ A concluding prayer for Non-Communicants, "that they might not be deprived of prayer as well as the Communion." *Microlog. Eccl. Obs. c. 51.* quoted by Menard Schol. in *Sacram. S. Greg. p. 605. ed. Ben.*

may be found meet to obtain rescue through Thy protection, and be saved through Thy deliverance, Who livest and reignest.

Super Oblata. Regard, O LORD, we beseech Thee, this solemn Sacrifice, that by the participation of this Mystery, what we believe and look for, we may, expecting, receive. Through the Lord.

*Pref...** To ^s Whom Alone it belongeth, that Thou art Good, and never by any change art other from Thyself; graciously, we beseech Thee, hear our supplications, and show to Thy Church the mercy for which she prayeth, manifesting to Thy people both the mystery of the Incarnation of Thine Only-Begotten, and the wonderful Sacrament of His Advent, that so it may be known among all nations, that what was promised before by the mouth of the holy Prophets, hath been fulfilled, and that they who have been arrayed in the confession of the truth may receive the glory of the adoption. Through.

Blessing. Almighty God, the Coming of Whose Only-Begotten ye both believe in the past, and look for as to come, may His Coming both sanctify you with spiritual light and enrich you with His blessing. Amen. May He defend you from all adversity in the course of this mortal life, and show Himself appeased toward you in the Judgment. Amen. That freed from all defilements of sin, ye may await without terror the Day of the tremendous trial. Amen. Which may Himself.

Post Comm. † May we receive, O LORD, Thy mercy in the midst of Thy temple, and with due reverence prepare for the solemn festival of our restoration. Through.

* The words, "It is very meet," to "Everlasting God," are to be supplied in each case.

Super Populum. Grant, we beseech Thee, O LORD, unto Thy people the Spirit of truth and peace, that through the Coming of Thine Only-Begotten they may both know Thee with their whole mind, and follow with their whole heart what is pleasing unto Thee. Through the Same our LORD.

THIRD WEEK BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD.

† Stir up, O LORD, our hearts to prepare the way of Thy Only-Begotten, that we may be found worthy to serve Thee with purified hearts, through His Coming, Who with Thee liveth and reigneth God.

Super Oblata. *† Be propitious, O LORD, we beseech Thee, to the prayers and Sacrifices of our lowliness, and since we have no merits to plead, do Thou succour us by the protection of Thy mercy. Through.

Pref.... Who by Thine unspeakable gift didst provide that our human nature, created after the likeness of Thine own, but made unlike through sin and death, should not perish by everlasting damnation; but Thine Infinite mercy did thence restore life, whence sin had brought in death, and the transgression of the virgin of old was effaced by a new and undefiled Virgin, Mary; who, saluted by the Angel, overshadowed by the HOLY SPIRIT, was found worthy to bear Him, Who by His will gave birth to all things; who marvelled at the fruitfulness of her conception and the integrity of her person, and rejoiced that she should give birth to Him of Whom she had her birth, our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Through Whom.

Blessing. God, Whose Coming is both believed, in the past, in the Incarnation, and looked for in the Judgment, cleanse you before He cometh, from all defilements of sin. Amen. May He first wash out in you all which in that future sifting He would punish,

that when the just Judge cometh, He may not find in you what He shall condemn. Amen. At Whose Coming may ye not go away into everlasting punishment, but be rewarded with everlasting gifts of bounty. Amen. Which may Himself vouchsafe to grant.

Post Comm. *† Filled with the food of spiritual nourishment, we humbly pray Thee, O LORD, that by the participation of this Mystery, Thou wouldest teach us to despise earthly things, and love the heavenly. Through our LORD.

Super Populum. * Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, to the whole of this Thy family, such steadfast will, that they may be fit in good works to meet Thy Son our LORD CHRIST when He cometh, so that, set at His Right Hand, they may be found worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom. Through the Same our LORD.

SECOND WEEK BEFORE THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD.

† O LORD⁶, we beseech Thee, lend Thine ear to our prayers, and enlighten the darkness of our mind by the grace of Thy visitation. Through our LORD.

Super Oblata. *† O LORD, we beseech Thee, let the Sacrifice of our devotion be unceasingly offered unto Thee, that It may both accomplish the sacred Mystery ordained to us, and work in us marvellously Thy salvation. Through the Same our LORD.

Pref. . . Through CHRIST, our LORD, Whose Incarnation wrought the salvation of the world, and Whose Passion procured the redemption of men whom He had created ; may He, we beseech Thee, lead us to everlasting rewards, Who redeemed us from the dark-

⁶ Varies verbally only from one of Gelasius, below in the daily prayers, 9.

ness of hell, and may He justify us in His second Coming, Who redeemed us in His first, that so His exaltation may defend us from all evil, Whose lowliness raised us up to life. Through Whom.

Blessing. May Almighty God look upon you with a forgiving Countenance, and pour into you the gift of His blessing. Amen. And may He who has made these, days of solemn festivity by the Incarnation of His Only-Begotten, from all adversities of this life and that to come, keep you unharmed. Amen. *That ye who with devout mind rejoice in the Coming of our Redeemer in the Flesh, may, when He cometh the second time in Majesty, be enriched with the rewards of everlasting life. Amen. Which may Himself vouchsafe to grant.

Post Comm. † O LORD, we implore Thy clemency, that these Divine supplies may prepare us for the coming Festival, cleansed from all sin. Through.

TENTH MONTH. FOURTH DAY OF THE WEEK.

*† Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that when the solemn Festival of our redemption cometh, it may both supply us with aids for this life present, and impart to us the rewards of everlasting bliss. Through our LORD.

Another. *† Make haste, we beseech Thee, O LORD, tarry not, and bestow upon us the aid of heavenly might, that they who trust in Thy tender mercy, may be relieved by the consolations of Thy Coming. Who livest and reignest.

Super Oblata. * May the gifts, O LORD, be well-pleasing unto Thee, wherewith are celebrated the mysteries of our deliverance and our life. Through our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Pref... Through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who, looked for by the ancient fathers, announced by an Angel, conceived by a Virgin, was in the end of the world given unto men. Who, we beseech Thee now that the festival of His Nativity approacheth, may be so appeased towards us, that with Thee and the HOLY SPIRIT He may come unto us, to dwell with us for ever. Through Whom.

Post Comm. May Thy Gifts, O LORD, preserve us, we beseech Thee, and bestow upon us everlasting life, through the Coming of Thine Only-Begotten. Who with Thee.

Super Populum. Grant, we beseech Thee, O LORD, to thy suppliants, the fulness of Thy grace, that, with Thy aid, following Thy commandments, they may receive consolation in this life and that to come. Through the LORD.

SIXTH DAY OF THE WEEK.

*† Raise up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy power, and come; that those who trust in Thy loving mercy may speedily be freed from all adversity. Who livest and reignest.

Super Oblata. * Grant, we beseech Thee, O LORD, that we may offer fruits of our devotion corresponding to the Gift which we consecrate. Through.

Pref... Who art the Sanctifier and The Ordainer of abstinence, Who art without end and without number, pour forth, we beseech Thee, upon us, in the days of our fasts, the Spirit of saving grace, and guard us by Thy protection from all the troubles of this world, that we who celebrate the Coming of Thine Only-Begotten, may feel His continual aid. Through Whom.

* May the Mysteries we have received profit us, O LORD, and both free us from our sins, and raise us up by the helping aid of Thy propitiation. Through our LORD.

THE SABBATH (SATURDAY), WITH TWELVE LESSONS
IN THE TENTH MONTH.

*† O God, Who seest that we, through our wickedness, are afflicted, mercifully grant that through Thy visitation we may be comforted. Through.

*† Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who are weighed down under the yoke of sin, through the servitude of the old man, may be set free by the new Birth of Thine Only-Begotten Son, for which we look, Who with Thee liveth and reigneth, God.

*† O LORD, we beseech Thee [look upon] us Thine unworthy servants, [and] whom the guilt of their own deeds saddeneth, do Thou gladden by the Coming of Thine Only-Begotten Son, Who with Thee.

*† Grant⁷, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the coming solemn festival of Thy Son may both supply us with healing remedies for this life, and bestow upon us everlasting rewards. Through the Same.

*† O LORD, we beseech Thee, mercifully hear the prayers of Thy people, that we who are justly punished for our sins, may be comforted by the visitation of Thy loving-kindness. Through the LORD.

*† O God, Who didst mitigate the flames of fire to the three Children, mercifully grant that the flame of sins kindle not us Thy servants. Through our LORD.

Super Oblata. * Sanctify, O LORD, the gifts of

⁷ Nearly the same as on the fourth day.

Thy Church, and grant that through these venerable Mysteries, we may be found worthy to be refreshed with the Bread from heaven. Through our LORD.

Pref... Who not only remittest sins, but also justifiest the sinners, and not only forgivest the guilty their sins, but bestowest on them gifts and rewards; of Whose loving-kindness we humbly pray, that we who by fasts and solemn vows do prepare for the Birth of Thine Only-Begotten, may by His gift both be freed from the disorders of this life present and receive everlasting rewards. Through Whom.

Post Comm. † We beseech Thee, O LORD our GOD, that the all-holy mysteries which Thou hast bestowed to guard our restoration, may be to us a remedy here and for ever. Through.

FIRST SUNDAY.

*† Raise up, O LORD, Thy power and come, and with great might succour us, that through the aid of Thy grace, what our sins do hinder, the bountiful grace of Thy propitiation may hasten, Who livest and reignest with God the Father in the Unity of the HOLY SPIRIT, God for ever and ever.

Super Oblata. O LORD, receive in Thy goodness these offerings presented unto Thee to be sanctified, that through their reception we may be cleansed from sin, and may be found worthy to await, without terror, the glory of the Coming of Thy Son. Through the same our LORD.

Pref... Through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Whose forerunner John was, in his birth, in preaching, in the wilderness, and his descent into Hell; and we pray Thee that the nearly-approaching solemnity of His venerable nativity may make us so pleasing unto Thee, as to bring us with the fruit of good works into

the kingdom of heaven, that so preparing in our hearts a way for the LORD, and doing worthy fruits of penitence, we may, through the preaching of John, obey the commands of our Saviour; and thus by the son of "the barren" we may come to the Son of the Virgin, by John great among men, to the Same our LORD Man-God, Who as He came hidden to redeem us, so may He justify, when He cometh, made manifest to judge. Through Whom.

Blessing. God, Who both restored you by the grace of the First Coming, and hath promised that in the Second He will give you the kingdom with the Holy Angels, sanctify you by the illumining light of His Coming. Amen. May He loose your chains before He cometh, that freed from the bands of sins, ye may without terror await His tremendous Coming. Amen. And Whom ye believe to have come on earth for your salvation, and await coming to Judgment, may ye be found worthy to behold without terror the glory of His Coming. Amen. Which may Himself vouchsafe to grant.

Post Comm. Grant unto us, O LORD, who are replenished with the virtues of the Heavenly Table, that we may both long for what is right, and receive what we long for. Through.

Super Populum. * Help, O LORD, the frailty of Thy people, that it may both come anew to the benefits of this great festival it longeth for, guarded in body, and with devoted mind attain to never-failing grace. Through.

PRAYERS FOR THE ADVENT OF THE LORD,
DAY BY DAY.

1. * Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we may with prosperous issue celebrate the coming solemnities of this great Festival, and be alike made

more intent on heavenly discipline, and gladder of these our times. Through.

2. *O LORD, we beseech Thee, cleanse our consciences by Thy visitation, that Thy Son JESUS CHRIST our LORD may, when He cometh, find in us a mansion prepared for Himself. Who with Thee.

3. O LORD, be near to all who look for Thee in truth, that at the Coming of Thy Son our LORD, we may be presented unto Thee with deeds well-pleasing in Thy sight. Through the same our LORD.

4. *Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, such grace unto Thy people, that they may with the utmost watchfulness wait for the Coming of Thine Only-Begotten, that as Himself, the Author of our Salvation, taught, we may prepare our souls, like shining lamps, to meet Him. Through.

5. Enlighten, O LORD, our minds with the light of Thy visitation, that, by Thy gift, we may be found worthy to be humble amid things prosperous, and in adversity, free from care. Through the LORD.

6 and 7. *Grant, O LORD. [The same as the 4th and 2nd on the Sabb. XII. Lect.]

8. *We beseech Thee, Almighty God, have respect unto our prayers, and give unto us of the compassion of Thy tender mercy, that we who through our own sins are afflicted, may by the Coming of our Saviour be relieved. Who with Thee liveth.

9. *O LORD, we beseech Thee, lend Thy merciful ears to our voice, and lighten the darkness of our heart by the light of Thy visitation. Who livest.

10. *Stretch forth, O LORD, the right hand of Thy Majesty and come, and pardon and absolve us from our sins. Who livest and reignest.

11. *Almighty God, let no earthly words or actions

hinder us hastening to meet Thy Son our LORD, but let the instruction of heavenly wisdom make us partakers of Himself. Who with Thee.

12. * Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that we who for our sins deserve to be afflicted, by the Coming of Thy Son may be freed from all adversities. Through.

13. O LORD, Who seest that we, through our own infirmity, are ever exposed to dangers, guard us by the visitation of the Coming of Thy Son, Who with Thee liveth and reigneth.

14. * Almighty God, be present with us, we beseech Thee, and in all our actions, by Thy inspirations prevent us, and by Thy help guard us, Who livest.

15. * O Almighty God, let Thy grace, we beseech Thee, always prevent and follow us, that, through the Coming of Thine Only-Begotten, Whom with the utmost longings of our heart we wait for, we may obtain all which is needful both for this present life and for that which is to come, Who with Thee liveth and reigneth.

16. * O God, Who seest that we trust in Thy loving-kindness, mercifully grant that through the Coming of Thine Only-Begotten, we may ever rejoice in Thy heavenly protection, Who with Thee liveth and reigneth, God.

17. * Let Thy mercy, O LORD, come to our relief, that from all the perils which hang over us for our sins, we may, at Thy Coming, find grace to be saved. Who livest and reignest.

18. * Raise up, O LORD, Thy power, that by Thy propitiation we may be saved, Who livest.

19. * Hasten, O LORD our God, tarry not, and

mightily deliver us from the power of Satan. Who livest.

20. * O LORD, our God, let all us who are upright of heart, rejoice, gathered together in the unity of the Faith, that when Thy Son our Saviour cometh, we may meet Him undefiled in the company of His Saints, Who with Thee.

21. * Make us, O LORD, we beseech Thee, to reject with our whole hearts our own evil, that when Thy Son our LORD cometh, we may be able to receive His good, Who with Thee liveth.

22. * Gird, we beseech Thee, O LORD our God, the loins of our minds mightily with Thy Divine Virtue, that when Thy Son, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, cometh, we may be found worthy of the feast of everlasting life, and from Himself be made meet to receive the prize of heavenly dignities. Who with Thee liveth and reigneth.

23. * Make us, we beseech Thee, O LORD our God, to await, in entire care and watchfulness, the Coming of Thy Son CHRIST our LORD, that when He cometh and knocketh, He may find us, not sleeping in sins, but watching and exulting in His promises, Who with Thee liveth and reigneth God for ever and ever. Amen.

VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD, AT THE
NINTH HOUR¹.

† O God, who gladdenest us with the annual expectation of our redemption, grant that we, who have with gladness received Thine Only-Begotten Son, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as our Redeemer, may also, when He cometh as our Judge, behold Him without fear, Who with Thee.

* The Holy Eucharist on Fast Days not being celebrated before three.

Super Oblata. *† Grant us, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that like as we do prepare for the adorable Nativity of Thy Son, so we may with joy receive His everlasting gifts. Through the Same.

Pref... Before Whose face we this day come in confession, and with suppliant voice implore, that by the services of the approaching night He would make us so wholly watchful, that we may be found meet, with pure minds, to reap the fruits of His coming Nativity, wherein, Invisible in Thy Substance, He, through the flesh, appeared visible in ours, and, One with Thee, not in time Begotten, not in Nature inferior, came to us born in time. Through Whom.

Post Comm. *† Grant, O LORD, that we, celebrating the Nativity of Thine Only-Begotten Son, may have new life in Him, through Whose heavenly mystery we have the true Meat and the true Drink. Through the Same.

At Vespers. * Grant, O merciful God, that to receive the marvellous mystery of the Nativity of Thy Son, the minds of believers may be prepared, and the hearts of unbelievers be subdued. Through the Same.

IN THE VIGIL OF THE LORD, AND IN THE NIGHT.

*† O God, who hast made this all-holy night to shine with the illumining of the True Light, grant, we beseech Thee, that we who have known the mysteries of That Light on earth, may have the full fruition of His joys in heaven. Who with Thee.

Super Oblata. † O LORD, we beseech Thee, let the oblation of this day's festival be acceptable unto Thee, that, through the largess of Thy grace, we may, through this all-holy Communion, be found in His form in Whom our substance is with Thee. Who with Thee.

Pref... * The Might of Whose Divine Nativity, the Unbegotten Greatness of Thy Majesty begat. Whom, ever the Son, and Begotten before all times, since Thou, ever full and perfect, didst never lack the Name of The Father, we praise and confess, in honour, and majesty, and power, equal to Thee with the Holy Spirit, and with threefold Name^o we believe One Majesty. And, therefore, with angels.

Blessing. The Almighty GOD, who by the Incarnation of His Only-Begotten chased away the darkness of the world, and by His glorious Nativity cast bright beams upon this all-holy night, chase forth from you the darkness of sin, and cast upon your heart the bright beams of the light of virtues. Amen. And may He who willed that the great joy of His all-holy Nativity should be by angels announced to the shepherds, Himself pour upon you the all-refreshing dew of His blessing, and, Himself your Shepherd, lead you to the everlasting pastures of everlasting joys. Amen. And may He, who by His Incarnation joined earthly things to heavenly, fill you with the sweet heavenly draught of inward peace and good-will, and make you partakers with the heavenly host. Amen. Which may Himself.

Post Comm. † Grant unto us, we beseech Thee, O LORD our GOD, that we, who rejoice to celebrate the Nativity of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, may, by meet conversation, be found worthy to belong to His holy fellowship. Who with Thee.

At Matins. * O merciful GOD, look upon us, and now, by the Birth of CHRIST, mercifully show to the minds of men the Light of the supreme Truth. Who with Thee.

^o It need hardly be said, that Name (as in the Old Testament so often) includes The Persons.

IN THE EARLY MORNING OF THE NATIVITY OF THE
LORD.

† Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that in us, who are bedewed with the new light of Thy Incarnate Word, that may shine forth in our works, which through faith beams in the mind.

*Super Oblata*¹. *† O LORD, we beseech Thee, may our gifts have in us a fruit befitting the mysteries of the Nativity of to-day², that, as He Who was born as Man, the Same shone upon us as God, so may this earthly substance bestow upon us that which is Divine. Through the Same.

Pref. . . . Because on this day the true light of our Saviour came forth, which made all things clear and manifest unto us, both in understanding and to sight. Therefore.

Post Comm. † O LORD, may the celebration of the mystery of His Nativity ever restore us, Whose new and wondrous Birth removed man's decrepitude. Amen.

ON THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD.

*† Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the new Nativity of Thine Only-Begotten Son in the Flesh may free us, Whom the servitude of the old man holdeth under the yoke of sin. Who with Thee.

Super Oblata. *† Sanctify, O Lord, by the new Nativity of Thine Only-Begotten, the gifts offered,

¹ Two Commemorations of St. Anastasia, and a Post Comm., now so used, are omitted, the object being to give the services of the seasons. They are not in the Sacramentary of St. Gelasius.

² The present Rom. adds, "and ever pour peace into us."

and cleanse us from the spots of our sins. Through the same.

Pref.... Because through the Mystery of the Incarnate Word, the new light of Thy brightness hath shone upon the eyes of our mind; that while we visibly know God, we may through Him be borne away by the love of things invisible. And therefore.

Blessing. May Almighty God bless you and raise your thoughts to things above, Who made this all-holy day to be sacred by the Nativity of His Son. Amen. And may He Who made Him, Who is the bread of angels, to be the food of His faithful in the manger of His Church, Himself both give you to taste in this present world the sweetness of everlasting joys, and bring you in the world to come to the satisfying fulness of eternal rewards. Amen. And may He who willed that His Infancy should be clothed with poor tattered raiment, Himself clothe you with the ornaments of heavenly robes. Amen. Which may Himself vouchsafe to grant, Whose kingdom and dominion endureth without end to everlasting ages. Amen. The blessing of God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and the peace of the LORD be with you always.

Post Comm. *† Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the SAVIOUR of the world born this day, as He is the Author of our Divine birth, so He may Himself also be to us the Giver of immortality. Who with Thee.

OTHER PRAYERS.

Grant to us, Almighty God, that Thy salvation, which on this festive day came forth in new and wondrous light from heaven, for the saving of the world, may ever dawn to renew our hearts. Who with Thee.

*Almighty, Everlasting God, Who hast consecrated this day by the Incarnation of Thy Word, and the Birth from the Blessed Virgin Mary, grant to Thy people a fellowship in this solemnity, that they who have been redeemed by Thy grace, may through Thy adoption be free from fear. Through the same.

O God, the strong foundation of our faith, Who in holy minds, as in the lofty mountains, establishest the everlasting gates, guarded by righteousness, grant unto us gloriously to believe in Thee, and with praise to confess Thy Son our LORD, made man for the redemption of souls. Who with Thee.

*Grant, we beseech Thee, O LORD, unto Thy servants increase of faith and sincerity, that they who glory in the Nativity of Thy Son our Lord, may, by Thy governance, not feel the adversities of the world, and what they long earnestly in time to celebrate, may without end enjoy. Through.

*O God, Who through the Birth from the Blessed Virgin Mary, without human concupiscence, hast made us, coming to be members of Thy Son, to be freed from all injury from our first father, grant, we beseech Thee, that we who have received this new creation, may be stripped of all contagion of the ancient decrepitude. Through the same.

*O God, Who didst most wonderfully form, and more wonderfully re-form, the dignity of man's nature, grant us, we beseech Thee, to be partakers of His Divinity Who vouchsafed to become a partaker of our humanity, JESUS CHRIST Thy Son. Who with Thee.

Almighty Everlasting God, Who hast appointed that the beginning and perfection of all religion should be in the Nativity of Thy Son our LORD, grant us, we beseech Thee, to be numbered in His inheritance, in Whom the sum of all men's salvation subsists. Who with Thee.

Grant, we beseech, to Thy people, O LORD, undefiled firmness of faith, that they who do confess Thine Only-Begotten, Co-Eternal with Thee in Thy glory, to have been born of a Virgin Mother in the real substance of our flesh, may be both freed from present adversities, and be translated to abiding joys. Through the Same.

Advent Hymns from the Breviary¹.

(SEE PREFACE.)

VERBUM SUPERNUM PRODIENS.

SUPERNAL Word, proceeding from
The Eternal Father's breast,
And, in the end of ages, come
To aid a world distrest :

Enlighten, LORD, and set on fire
Our spirits with Thy love,
That, dead to earth, they may aspire
And live to joys above :

That when the Judgment-seat on high
Shall fix the sinner's doom,
And to the just a kind Voice cry,
Come to your destined home :

Safe from the black and yawning lake
Of restless, endless pain,
We may the Face of God partake,
The bliss of Heaven attain.

To GOD the Father, GOD the Son,
And HOLY GHOST, to Thee,
As heretofore, when time is done,
Unending glory be. Amen.

¹ The place of these hymns in the rest of the service is marked in Tract 78, by the Latin words.

CREATOR ALME SIDERUM.

MAKER of Heaven, Eternal Light
Of all who do believe ;
SAVIOUR from sorrows infinite,
JESU, these prayers receive :

Who, sooner than our foe malign
Should triumph, from above
Didst come, to be the Medicine
Of a sick world, in love ;

And the deep wounds to cleanse and cure
Of a whole race, didst go,
Pure Victim, from a Virgin pure,
The bitter Cross unto.

Who hast a Name and hast a Power,
The height and depth to sway,
And Angels bow and devils cower,
In reverence or dismay :

Thou too shalt be our Judge at length ;
LORD, in Thy grace bestow
Thy weapons of celestial strength,
And snatch us from the foe.

Honour and glory, power and praise,
To Father, and to Son,
And Holy Ghost, be paid always,
The Eternal Three in One. Amen.

EN CLARA VOX.

HARK, a joyful voice is thrilling,
And each dim and winding way
Of the Ancient Temple filling ;
Dreams, depart ! for it is day.

CHRIST is coming! from thy bed,
Earth-bound soul! awake and spring
With the sun, new-risen to shed
Health on human suffering.

Lo! to grant a pardon free
Comes a willing Lamb from Heaven;
Sad and tearful, hasten we,
One and all, to be forgiven.

Once again He comes in light,
Girding earth with fear and woe;
Lord! be then our living might
From our guilt and ghostly foe.

To the Father, and the Son,
And the Spirit, Who in Heaven
Ever witness, Three and One,
Praise on earth be ever given. Amen.

**Even so, come,
Lord Jesus.**

Extract from S. Ambrose,

ON "ST. MARY AS AN EXAMPLE TO VIRGINS."

(SEE PREFACE.)

"BE then the life of Mary as a picture of Virginity, in which the form of chastity and beauty of virtue may be reflected, as in a mirror. Thence you may take examples of life, and authoritative patterns of goodness set forth, as in a perfect model, show what you ought to correct, what to imitate, what to hold fast.

"A teacher's excellence is the first thing to make us eager to learn. And what more excellent than the Mother of God? what brighter than she whom the Brightness chose for His own? what purer than she who gave birth to His Body without any bodily contact? For there is little need to speak of her other virtues; she was a virgin in mind, as well as body; for there was no guile there to defile the purity of her feeling. She was lowly in heart, grave in words, prudent in mind, sparing of speech, studious in reading. She put no trust in uncertain riches, but in the prayers of the poor: she was attentive to her occupations, modest in discourse, always looking for God, not man, as the Judge of her thoughts. She did harm to no one, but wished well to all. She paid deference to elders, envied not those of her own age; she avoided all boasting, obeyed reason, loved virtue. When did she ever pain her parents even by a look? When disagree with her relations? When despise the lowly, or mock the weak? When did she avoid the poor? Nay, the only companies of men which she ever visited were

those of which mercy could not be ashamed, and which modesty need not pass by. There was no harshness in her look, no forwardness in her speech, nothing immodest in her actions : she had no affectation of delicacy in her gesture, or too great easiness in her motions, or petulance in her voice ; the very form of her body was the copy of her mind, the image of goodness. For a good house ought to be known even at the threshold, and to show, at the first entrance, that there is no darkness within ; that the mind, unobstructed by any barriers of the body, may be like the light of a lamp, placed within, gleaming without.

“ Why need I say how sparing she was in food, and how overflowing in all her duties ? In the latter she almost went beyond nature, in the former she scarcely supplied it ; in her duties she left no interval of time unemployed, in her fasting she often added one day to another. Whenever she needed refreshment, such food was generally at hand as might preserve life, not minister to luxury. The desire of sleep never forewent the need of it ; and even then, while the body was at rest, the mind was waking : for the mind, during sleep, will often go over again what has been read, or continue what has been interrupted by sleep, or carry out into action what has been fore-arranged, or determine beforehand what ought to be done.

“ She never left her house except to go to Church, and even this with her parents or relations. At home she was most diligent in private, abroad she was always attended by companions ; and yet she had no better guardian than herself, for her gait and address inspired so much reverence, that each step of her foot seemed like an ascending step in virtue. For though a virgin have others with her to guard her person, yet she should have herself as the guardian of her actions :

she will have more from whom to learn if she have the virtues for her instructresses; for every action will be self-discipline. Mary paid such attention to all, as if most were her advisers: she fulfilled all her duties in such sort that she did not so much learn as teach.

“Such has the Evangelist represented her; such did the Angel find her; such did the HOLY SPIRIT choose her. Why dwell upon particulars, how her parents loved her, strangers praised her, when she was worthy of being the Mother of the SON of GOD? When the Angel entered, she was found in an inward chamber of the house, companionless, that no one might break through or disturb her attention; for she had no wish even for female companions, whose companions were her good thoughts. Nay, she thought herself least alone, when she was alone. For how could she be alone, with whom were books of Scripture, so many Archangels, so many Prophets?

“Lastly, too, Gabriel found her where he had been wont to visit her; and Mary, startled at his appearance, trembled at the Angel, as thinking him a man; but, having heard his name, she recognized him as one not unknown. Thus she was a stranger to a man, but not to an Angel; whence you may perceive how holy her ears, how full of modesty her eyes. Then, when saluted by him, she held her peace; when called, she answered. At first her emotions were troubled, but afterwards she promised obedience.

“What pious affection she bare her kin, Holy Scripture hints. For she became yet more lowly when she knew she was chosen by GOD, and went at once to the hill-country to her relation. And this surely, was not for her to learn faith through example, who had already believed the Word of GOD, For, ‘Blessed,’ she said, ‘art thou who hast believed.’

And she stayed with her three months. So long a period is spent, not in gaining faith, but in giving proof of affection. And this too was after the child, leaping in his mother's womb, had saluted her as the Mother of his LORD, gifted with religion before natural reason.

"Afterwards, when so many signs followed, when the barren bare, the Virgin conceived, the dumb spake, the wise men worshipped, Symeon waited in expectation, the stars brought their message, Mary, who had been troubled at the Angel's approach, was not troubled at the miracles. 'She pondered all these things,' he saith, 'in her heart.' Though the Mother of the LORD, she longed to learn the commands of the LORD; though the Mother of God, she desired to know God.

"What shall we say of her going every year, and that with Joseph, to Jerusalem, at the solemn time of the Passover? Everywhere in a virgin must modesty be a companion of each several virtue. Modesty must never be disjoined from virginity, for without it virginity cannot be. And, therefore, Mary did not even go to the Temple without one to be guardian of her modesty.

"This is the picture of Virginity. For such was Mary, that her life alone should be the instructress of all. If, then, the example displeaseth not, let us approve the work; and whoso wishes for her reward, let her follow her example. How brightly in this one Virgin do all the forms of the virtues shine forth! The seclusion of modesty, the banner of faith, the obedience of devotion; a virgin at home, companion in the offices of kindness, a mother at the temple.

"O! how many virgins will she meet, and enfold-ing them, will take with her to the LORD, saying, 'This virgin has kept the bridal of my Son and His

nuptial chamber with modesty unspotted.' How will the LORD Himself recommend them to His Father! repeating those words of His Own: 'Holy Father, these are they whom I have kept for Thee: on whom the Son of Man lay His Head and rested; I pray that, where I am, there they may be also with Me. But if they who lived not to themselves alone, ought to do good not to themselves alone, let her redeem her parents, her brethren. Righteous Father, the world hath not known Me, but these have known Me, and would not know the world!'

"What a procession will that be! what joy of Angels shouting for gladness, that she who has lived a heavenly life on earth is found worthy to dwell in heaven! Then too Mary will take her timbrel, and lead the choruses of virgins singing to the LORD, that they have passed through the sea of the world, unshaken by the world's waves. Then shall each one sing with joy: 'I will go unto the altar of the LORD, unto God, Who maketh glad my youth.' 'I offer unto God the sacrifice of praise, and pay my vows unto the Most High.'

"For I could not doubt that the altars of God are open to you, since I can boldly call your minds altars, on which, day by day, Christ is offered up for the redemption of the body. For if the body of a virgin is the temple of God, what is her mind, which, while her body is shaken like glowing embers, being laid open by the Hand of the Eternal Priest, breathes forth the incense of Divine fire? Blessed Virgins! who exhale an undying fragrance, as a garden from its flowers, or a temple from its holiness, or an altar from its priest!" (De Virgin. ii. 2.)

THE END.

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